Valley Voice

Volume XXXV No. 7 • 2 April, 2015

www.ourvalleyvoice.com

50% of the pine forest could be dead or dying.

National Forest Die-Off Cause of Impending Disaster

Catherine Doe

At the March 24th Tulare County Supervisor meeting Kevin Elliot, forest supervisor for Sequoia and Kings National Parks, was invited to speak about the condition of the parks. According to The Fresno Bee, "A massive die-off of pine trees in the southern Sierra Nevada caused by beetles attacking drought-stressed trees is turning forests brown and creating a fire tinderbox."

Elliot said that the forest service is monitoring the die-off and trying to mitigate the harm done by the four-year drought. A five percent die off a year is normal, he said, but in the last six months the number has increased tenfold, meaning 50% of the pine forest could be dead. The bark beetle has always been around to cull the sick trees.

"Normally, trees produce enough sap to thwart the insects but years of below average rainfall have weakened their natural defenses," he said.

The beetle's larvae chews into the wood and eventually kills the tree, according to The Fresno Bee.

"You know there is a problem when, just by driving around, you see the forest turn from green to red, brown and finally grey," said Elliot.

Emphasizing that the forest service is limited on what it can do because of scarce resources and potential litigation, Elliot outlined their strategy. The forest service hasn't revised its maintenance plan since 1988. Their long term priorities will be to update this plan with an emphasis on increasing pace and scale of efforts to mitigate climate change.

In a few months, the forest service

FOREST continued on **9 »**

District Election Boundaries Focus of Public Hearings

Staff Reports

Three public hearings will be held to determine the boundaries for future City Council elections. The hearings are scheduled for Monday, April 6, April 20 and May 4. The April 6 meeting is scheduled to be held at the Visalia Convention Center, 303 E. Acequia Ave. All hearings will be held during the regular session of the City Council meetings, which begin at 7 p.m. The April 20 and May 4 meetings will be held at City Hall, 707 W. Acequia Ave.

The City of Visalia must develop five City Council districts for use starting with the 2016 City Council election. Legal requirements and traditional criteria for the drawing of the lines were approved by the Council at its Aug. 4, 2014 meeting with Resolution

BOUNDARIES continued on **8 »**

Chief Salazar Announces Promotion

Staff Reports

Chief Jason Salazar announces the promotion of Amy Watkins to the position of Lieutenant.

Amy Watkins

Amy began her employment with the Visalia Police Department in 2000. As an officer, Amy has held assignments in the Patrol Division, Youth Services Unit, and Violent Crimes Unit.

In April of 2009, Amy was promoted to the position of Sergeant and held assignments in the Patrol Division and the Professional Standards Bureau where she served as both the Department's Public Information Officer and Training Sergeant. Prior to her promotion, Amy was assigned as the Property Crimes Sergeant.

Amy holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Management.

Amy's promotion will be effective Saturday, April 4, 2015.

State Party Finds Local Democrats Unfairly Sanctioned

Dave Adalian

Four members of the Tulare County Democratic Central Committee who were removed or had their voting rights stripped, have been reinstated following a California Democratic Party review of the TCDCC's actions.

An eight-page finding by the CDP's Compliance Review Committee issued March 16, states the procedure used to remove the four TCDCC members -- Albert Aguilar of Tulare, Annette Guadagnin of Visalia, Susanne Gundy of Visalia and Suzanna Aguilera-Marrero, a former congressional candidate -- was inconsistent with both the state party's bylaws and those of the TCDCC. Further, TCDCC representation on the Democratic State Central Committee and its Executive Board was suspended until the members are reinstated with full rights to participate and the TCDCC has officially notified the California Secretary of State. The TCDCC voted to reinstate the four.

Suzanna Aguilera-Marrero

Yet, tensions appear to remain high among local party leadership, and the two sides continue to disagree about why the members were removed or had their rights revoked. Of the four, only Aguilera-Marrero was allowed to continue attending TCDCC functions, but without the ability to fully participate.

Rules not followed

What all parties involved agree upon is the notices for the meetings at which the TCDCC acted were not properly presented. The first action to change the status of those involved took place at a meeting held Oct. 22, 2014 and noticed on Oct. 14, 2014. The notice, however, did not contain the agenda for the meeting, meaning those affected and the other members of the TCDCC did not know the issue would be discussed.

DEMOCRATS continued on **11 »**

County Details Top Priorities Identified in Water Study

County officials have detailed their top priorities derived from the Tulare Lake Basin Disadvantaged Community Water Study. On February 18, Tulare County Supervisor Allen Ishida and Senior Administrative Analyst - Water Resources Denise England testified before the State of California's Assembly Committee on Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials during an Oversight Hearing on "Tulare County's Drinking Water: Addressing Water Quality and Water Supply Challenges."

Upon hearing Ishida and England testify about the water study, Vice Chair of the Assembly Committee Brian Dahle requested that the county detail its top five priorities that came from the study, which included 59 recommendations affecting state agencies, local government, water boards, well owners and systems. In response to Dahle's request, the county prepared a list of its priorities in challenge-solution format. Below is a short summary for each of the top five priorities identified by the water study.

1. Private Well Assistance
   - Challenge: More than 950 private domestic wells in Tulare County have gone dry due to prolonged drought conditions.
   - Solution: Provide funds that can be used for low interest loans for private wells and allow repayment to be collected on the tax roll or establish a loan program with seed money within the Housing Authority.
2. Create Sustainable Operation & Maintenance Revenue Streams
   - Challenge: Prop 218 often hinders systems and local governments from collecting reasonable and necessary fees to cover basic costs of operating and maintaining the systems.
   - Solution: Reform the statue to include for reasonable and necessary water and sewer rates. In order to protect rate payers, a means test could be established to determine "reasonable and necessary" rates.
3. Streamline Funding Processes
   - Challenge: In previous water bond measures, less than two percent of funding went to disadvantaged community water and wastewater needs. Due to the incapacity of these communities to prepare complicated application packets and the long waiting period for projects to be funded, disadvantaged community water funds are not reaching their target.
   - Solution: Similar to the Tulare Lake Basin Disadvantaged Community Water Study, the State could allocate funds to a region and allow those in the region to prioritize projects to meet the community's needs.
4. Establish a Regional Disadvantaged Community Coordinator
   - Challenge: There are many entities that house programs and funding opportunities for disadvantaged community water and wastewater needs. Many

WATER continued on **6 »**

QUAIL PARK RETIREMENT VILLAGE'S

Wellness and Information Fair

FOR SENIORS, FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS

FRIDAY, APRIL 24 • 9:00 AM TO 2:00 PM

4520 W. Cypress Avenue
Visalia, California 93277

For more information call (559) 624-3500

Raffle Prizes, Senior Resource Booths, Refreshments

Quail Park of Visalia

A Senior Lifestyle Community

4520 W. Cypress Avenue
Visalia, CA 93277
(559) 624 - 3500

www.quailparkofvisalia.com
Affiliated with Kaweah Delta Health Care District
Lic. #547201356

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

Not Playing With A Full Deck

I'm writing this on my birthday--the 52nd--and it feels the most portentous yet. Twenty-one bounced off, for instance, and turning 40 was meaningless. It is not that I dread a beckoning mortality, or even feel--in fact--that it is approaching. As I have said before, there have been days when death has seemed the attractive option. Neither is it the deep regret--a green frustration--that the amount of traveling I have done has not been commensurate with the amount of reading. I have not been out of Tulare County for nearly two years now--and it hasn't killed me. Not physically.

The occasion is not laden with ridiculous symbology, my age now matching the number of weeks in a year, say, or the notion that--at 52--I'll finally be playing with a full deck of cards.

What 2015 marks is the 20th year I have been living with Grave's Disease.

It has been something of a roller coaster--from thyroid ebb to week-long panic attacks--and I thought, until this year, that the worst of it was during the beginning, when my eyeballs nearly bulged out of their sockets. I've long since reconciled myself to looking like a mad bomber. At the time, the pain was farcical--like passing kidney stones through the corneas--but it eventually subsided, and I became accustomed, mercifully, to all the symptoms of the disease. This has been the worst of it, this acclimation to the insidious. I can't complain. Moreover, I have been fortunate that my thyroid gland has not yet perished--as is customary with this condition--so that not having ablated it made for a wise decision. It has thus far saved me 20 years of life-sustaining thyroid supplements.

And now something is wrong with one shoulder. It doesn't hurt, but neither does it work very well--with the result that I don't enjoy a full range of motion in the corresponding arm. What I suspect is that I am settling unevenly. What I have learned is that I've reached an age when things might not ever improve. Grave's Disease has taught me just to live with it.

There's this for consolation: At least now I can write about it. Before Obamacare, any revelation of a pre-existing condition would not only have killed my own plan but quite possibly the health insurance aspirations of the whole family.

Yet we have all had to learn to live with other ghastly and uncontrollable conditions which ghost our existence--death and taxes. We've already dispensed with death, but there remains, during this season, famously, taxes.

Taxes! Every year the prospect of having to pay an inordinately onerous sum hangs over our heads like the sword of Damocles. We do decently, our family, but one untoward development and--poof!--there goes our ability to meet this commitment. Is this any way to run a country? Can the country even be said to be being run?

If you want to play it straight--by which I mean assume no loan, if you can get one, or farm the bill out to a credit card--it is next to impossible to pay both tuition and taxes. Especially if you do decently and have several children. I wear clothes until they literally fall off of me--ME, the vaunted United States taxpayer so graciously thanked last week by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai.

I'm glad, I guess, that we could send soldiers to his country's aid--but I'd rather send our kids to college.

"If I had no hope you guys could swing it," our youngest son recently told us, "I guess I'd have to join the army."

There's the insanity of it for you, brought full circle. Brought home.

And when our veterans come home they are not cared for as they should be. I can't think of anything more shabby than that. Where are all of our tax dollars going? It is clear to me that most of our tax investment is going into the military--and on the front end, that of training, procurement, maintenance and deployment. This is money that is keen to keep forces in foreign fields but evaporates when the Veterans' Administration needs funding. This is a national disgrace.

I don't mind getting old, and all that comes with the territory--it is, as is said, better than the alternative. One doesn't really have a choice. But if ours is a government "of, by, and for the people" then we bloody well can do a damn sight better. We have options. We can pay for our children's education and for the care of our returning veterans, if we must pay such high taxes. Or we can pay less--not to mention fewer--taxes.

Everything is taxed--including my patience--and I'm tired of just living with it. Taxes are like some chronic condition, a malady you never quite can be cured of. And then you die. And then there are estate taxes.

— Joseph Oldenbourg

THE VALLEY VOICE IS YOUR NEWSPAPER

Published by The Valley Voice, LLC.

Publisher/Editor: Joseph Oldenbourg
joseph@ourvalleyvoice.com

Staff:
Catherine Doe, writer (catherine@ourvalleyvoice.com)
Tony Maldonado, webmaster (tony@ourvalleyvoice.com)
Nancy Vigran, advertising (nancy@ourvalleyvoice.com)
Stefan Barros, sports (stefan@ourvalleyvoice.com)

Contact us & share your opinion: www.ourvalleyvoice.com
208 W. Main St., Ste. E • Visalia, CA 93291

Political Fix

Catherine Doe

Author Needs To Turn the Gun on Himself

For $200, a person in California can petition to have a law put on the ballot through the gathering of signatures. Attorney General Kamala Harris then has 30 days to publish a summary and title of the measure.

Orange County lawyer Matt McLaughlin has done just that and filed the Sodomite Suppression Act. It states, "the abominable crime against nature known as buggery, called also sodomy, is a monstrous evil that Almighty God, giver of freedom and liberty, commands us to suppress on pain of our utter destruction even as he overthrew Sodom and Gomorrha.

Seeing that it is better that offenders should die rather than that all of us should be killed by God's just wrath against us for the folly of tolerating-wickedness in our midst, the People of California wisely command, in the fear of God, that any person who willingly touches another person of the same gender for purposes of sexual gratification be put to death by bullets to the head or by any other convenient method.

No person shall distribute, perform, or transmit sodomistic propaganda directly or indirectly by any means to any person under the age of majority. Sodomistic propaganda *is* defined as anything aimed at creating an interest in or an acceptance of human sexual relations other than between a man and a woman. Every offender shall be fined $1 million per occurrence, and/or imprisoned up to 10 years, and/or expelled from the boundaries of the state of California for up to life."

He goes on, but I think you get the idea.

Ms. Harris wants to block the ballot measure but legally cannot. The California State Supreme Court has already ruled on similar cases and has declared an Attorney General cannot reject any ballot measure. Nevertheless, Ms. Harris is still trying. To get this initiative on the ballot Mr. McLaughlin must gather about 366,000 valid names.

This raises the question: Why can't the state's initiative process screen out blatantly illegal laws?

The rationale behind the measure, which may actually be to test California's tolerance of divergent ideas, is hard to determine because no one has been able to find Mr. McLaughlin. Everyone is wondering who this attorney is and what he actually does for a living. He was accepted to the bar in 1998 and listed his address as a Mail Box Express. For those unfamiliar with Mail Box Express, it comes in handy for those who want to avoid creditors, conduct scams, or deal drugs. Right now a petition is circulating to have Mr. McLaughlin disbarred.

Whereas no one really wants our Attorney General to have the power to reject ballot measures she finds personally objectionable, there has to be some bar set when it involves public safety. One hypothesis is that Mr. McLaughlin is testing California's free speech. The accepted rubric for free speech has been that, if it imperils the lives of others, such as yelling "fire" in a crowded theater, then it would not be covered under free speech. Murder would seem to fall beneath that bar.

There are many less offensive ways to challenge California's practice of free speech. Why not file a ballot measure with the Secretary of State that says lying, greasy-haired, skinny, white male lawyers should be put to death by a bullet to the brain? Is Mr. McLaughlin scared that measure might actually pass?

I don't advocate for murder, but there is one Visalia lawyer in particular that comes to mind – the type who you know who is lying because his lips are moving. He would motivate me to at least sign the petition but I would never actually vote for such a measure. Karma will deal a much harsher justice to lawyers like him than any bullet to the brain could.

Are We Allowed To Die With Dignity? California Is Trying

Five states--Oregon, Washington, Vermont, Montana and New Mexico--have legal protections for doctors who help a terminally ill person die with dignity. Right now, California is trying to join their ranks.

In Montana and New Mexico, a doctor is protected if he or she assists in the suicide of a terminally-ill patient, but there is no oversight. California's law will be modeled after the Oregon, Washington and Vermont version. Senate Bill 128 would permit self-injestion of a pharmaceutical drug. It would only be available to those with less than six months to live and include supportive services such as hospice and palliative care. The Oregon's law is 17 years old and has no reported cases of abuse. Last year, 155 Oregonians used the law to help end their lives.

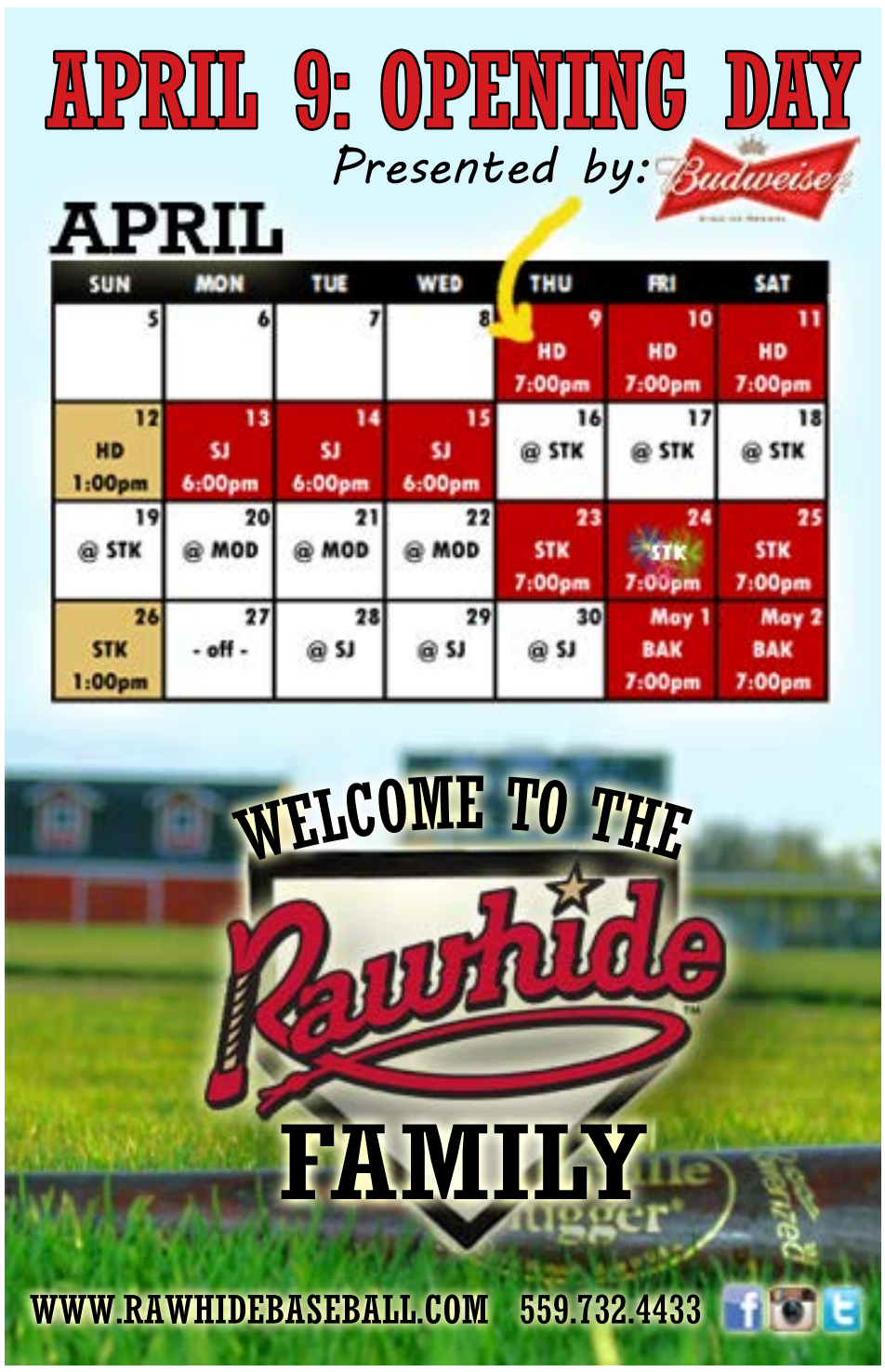
One of those 155 people who ended their lives was actually not an Oregonian, but a Californian. Brittany Maynard was forced to move while dying of a brain tumor so she didn't have to endure an excruciating death. She made her case very public, saying she should have been able to stay at her home in California and legally obtain end-of-life drugs.

SB 128, the End of Life Option Act is authored by state Sen. Bill Monning, D-Carmel, Assemblywoman Susan Talamantes Eggman, D-Stockton and State Senator Lois Wolk, D-Davis. One of the bill's endorsers is Senator Dianne Feinstein. She wrote the state senators in a letter, "The right to die with dignity is an option that should be available for every chronically suffering terminally ill consenting adult in California. I share your concern that terminally ill California residents currently do not have the option to obtain end-of-life medication if their suffering becomes unbearable."

The bill's first hearing was Wednesday, March 25 in the Senate Health Committee. The bill won approval of the committee by a 5-2 vote along party lines. Since the Democrats have been painted as the party of big government, with a capital "B," you would think the two votes against freedom would be cast by the Democrats. But that would be incorrect.

While the debate rages, volunteers

POLITICAL FIX continued on **5 »**



High Speed Rail Authority Seeks Cooperative Agreement with Tulare County

Catherine Doe

The California High Speed Rail Authority (Authority) has met for a second time with Tulare County residents to mitigate the effects the rail will have on their businesses. Once the residents and High Speed Rail (HSR) come to an understanding, the Tulare County Board of Supervisors intends to sign the High Speed Rail Cooperative Agreement.

As construction starts in Madera, the Authority has requested that each affected county sign a cooperative agreement. The Cooperative Agreement with the HSR "provides the framework for the collaboration that will be required between Tulare County and the California High-Speed Rail Authority in the relocation of County facilities to accommodate the High-Speed Rail project, " as stated on the supervisor's meeting agenda item. Cooperative agreements have already been signed between the Authority and Madera, Fresno and Kern counties. Kings County will not talk to the Authority and the Tulare County's agreement is pending until all issues are resolved with the land owners.

A 23 mile stretch of rail is planned for the southwestern corner of Tulare County and mostly parallels Highway 43. The rail will pass by the towns of Corcoran, Alpaugh and Allensworth. Though sparsely populated and sparsely traveled, the rail will disrupt several agriculture enterprises and dislocate several families from their homes.

Property owners are meeting with the authority to outline proposed changes concerning overpasses and road closures. The Resource Management Agency (RMA) acted as mediator at both meetings. HSR has a proposed elevated rail over Corcoran, so as to not cut the rural town in half. An owner of a nearby dairy and anabolic digester suggested that HSR continue the elevated portion of the rail over his property for an additional mile. The elevated rail would go past Avenue 136 and allow the owner to save the digester and his dairy.

Another proposed change was to eliminate two overpasses on Avenue 128 and Avenue 120. Elimination of the overpasses would result in both avenues closing. Traffic on both of these avenues is light, but indispensible for several area agriculture businesses' trucks to access Highway 99. To mitigate the closing of the two avenues it was suggested that the Authority extend and improve Avenue 112 to Highway 99. One business owner runs 20 trips a day on Avenue 128, trucking cream and grain to Highway 99. If the Authority agrees to the improvements to Avenue 112 his business and others, could use it as a viable alternative.

Another request is to add a three season underpass at Avenue 24. At the bottom of Tulare County there is a nine mile gap with no crossing. The small underpass would allow for emergency vehicles to access the area. The authority has already approved of one such underpass in Madera and already has the blueprint for the underpasses' construction.

Even if the Authority finds these changes are possible, some homeowners will have to relocate. But the dairies and farms will be able to continue operating except one. The one business that will not survive is a long-time feed mill in Angiola at the intersection of Highway 43 and Avenue 112. The mill, that supplies feed to local pig and poultry farms, will have to be torn down. It is the hope of HSR that the mill can be relocated.

As of press time, all of the suggested changes are possible but will cost more than the original plan. Terry Ogle, Central Valley Regional Project Manager for the California High-Speed Rail Authority, said that one mile of elevated rail costs 15 million and one overpass costs three million. With the elimination of two overpasses at a saving of $6 million dollars, and the inclusion of one three season underpass, and one mile of elevated rail, the HSR is looking at an increased cost of approximately $10 million - give or take a million.

Another wrinkle in changing the original plan, is that some of the changes are outside the environmental footprint of HSR's already approved Environmental Impact Report (EIR). In regard to the EIR, Eric Coyne, Economic Development coordinator, asked that the HSR think outside the box and possibly have Tulare County take on the task of doing the EIR. With Tulare County's "Open for Business" motus operandi, the county has gained the ability to complete an EIR in months versus years, as is the case in other counties. The county's ability to quickly process EIR's draws business to the area and may possibly help the Authority.

According to Diana Gomez, Central Valley HSR regional director, the Authority's EIRs are ultimately approved by the Federal Rail Administration (FRA) and it was uncertain if the FRA would accept an EIR done by another entity. Gomez said that the Authority would be getting back together with RMA hopefully the week of April 6th to review what they had come up with in regards to the suggested changes.

Among land owners they was feeling of an underlying hope that HSR would just go away. Still, they are resigned to the fact that HSR is going to be built with or without them, and unlike in Kings County, have been willing to sit down with the Authority to make the best of a bad situation.

The dairies and farms will be saved if the Authority accepts all the changes suggested, but that is not the entire story. Hundred-year-old homesteads will be destroyed and elderly residents will unwillingly be relocated. The farms and dairies will survive but will lose some land and have to accommodate being dissected by an impassable rail line.

The Tulare County Board of Supervisors has implied that once the effected businesses are satisfied they will sign the Cooperative Agreement. A vote by the BOS does not mean they support HSR. As Supervisor Steve Worthley said, the HSR is going to be built anyway and that our not signing is not going to stop the project from going forward.

"It's going to happen," he said.

George Runner Suggests Elimination of State Income Tax

During a discussion at the 2015 Cal Tax Annual Members meeting, Board of Equalization Vice Chair George Runner called for a meaningful public discourse on tax reform ideas that makes life easier for taxpayers. Runner suggested replacing California's income tax with a sales tax on services.

"If you want real tax reform, we ought to look at eliminating the state's personal and corporate income tax," said Runner. "One less tax agency would make California a far more attractive place for jobs, retirees and investment."

Runner noted that if California eliminated income tax more companies would base themselves in California. Also, more residents would stay in the state upon retirement, leading to more revenue for the State of California.

Seven states do not have an income tax. Those states include Alaska, Florida, Nevada, South Dakota, Texas, Washington and Wyoming.

Runner said true tax reform makes tax systems simpler, rather than more complicated. He called Senate Bill 8 (Hertzberg), which would extend sales tax to services, a massive tax increase. In its current form the legislation would make California's tax system more complicated and add thousands of state auditors and tax collectors to state payrolls.

"Any shift to a broader reliance on sales tax must be combined with real tax reform that removes barriers to doing business in our state," added Runner. "Don't be seduced by false reform that makes California's tax code more complicated for everyone."

Runner called for dynamic economic modeling of the likely benefits of an elimination of income tax and a shift to a consumption-based tax system. He encouraged businesses to conduct their own modeling to weigh the pros and cons of such a structure.

The annual meeting hosted by Cal Tax attracts taxpayers from many industries and gives the business community an opportunity to be updated on legislative affairs.

Tulare County Maintains 'Stable' Fitch Ratings

International credit rating agency Fitch Ratings affirmed stable credit ratings for Tulare County's implied general obligation and certificates of participation (COPs) series.

Board of Supervisors Chairman Steve Worthley said the affirmation of stable credit ratings is reflective of Tulare County's strong financial performance during tough economic times.

Citing Tulare County's stable economy, healthy financial position, and manageable long term liabilities, Fitch Ratings affirmed the implied general obligation at AA- and the COPs series at A+. An "A" assignment denotes high credit quality while an "AA" assignment denotes very high credit quality, according to Fitch Ratings.

County Administrative Officer Jean Rousseau said the stable credit ratings will save taxpayers' money should Tulare County choose to borrow money in the future because the positive ratings allow for more flexibility and lower interest rates in financing long-term projects such as roads and facilities.

The Fitch report states:

FITCH AFFIRMS TULARE COUNTY, CA'S COPS AT 'A+'; OUTLOOK STABLE

Fitch Ratings affirms the following Tulare County, California (the county) ratings:

- Implied general obligation (GO) at 'AA-';
- $11.5 million 1998 certificates of participation (COPs) at 'A+'. The Rating Outlook is Stable.

SECURITY

The COPs are backed by the county's covenant to annually budget and appropriate lease rental payments for the use and occupancy of certain essential governmental facilities, subject to abatement, and are supported by standard insurance requirements and a cash-funded debt service reserve fund.

KEY RATING DRIVERS

STABLE AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY: Tulare County's economy is primarily based on agriculture with correspondingly low income and wealth levels, as well as high unemployment. The county's economy has benefited from continuing strong demand for agricultural commodities but faces risks from prolonged drought conditions.

HEALTHY FINANCIAL POSITION: The County has maintained consistently balanced operations. Unrestricted general fund balances are healthy and the county retains considerable financial flexibility.

MANAGEABLE LONG-TERM LIABILITIES: Overlapping debt levels are low and outstanding direct debt amortizes rapidly. Carrying costs for debt service and retiree benefits are low.

RATING SENSITIVITIES

FINANCIAL POSITION KEY: Deterioration in the county's financial position, whether due to drought impacts or other factors, would result in downward rating pressure. Continued stable operations and increases in reserves, conversely, would add upward rating pressure. The Stable Outlook reflects Fitch's expectation that such shifts are unlikely.

CREDIT PROFILE

Tulare County is located near the geographic center of California and has a population of approximately 450,000. The county's borders stretch from the Central Valley to the peaks of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and include large portions of national forests and parklands. The local economy is concentrated in the agricultural sector and Tulare County is the largest producer of dairy products in the U.S., with milk production alone valued at $2.1 billion in 2013, and total agricultural production nearing $8 billion.

STABLE ECONOMY; DROUGHT RISKS

Political Fix

Continued from p. 3

around the state are already helping suffering people end their lives -- surreptitiously, without authorization or official oversight -- in private bedrooms across the state. It makes one wonder, what possible business does our government have telling us who to marry, whether to have a baby, and how to die?

If the bill makes it out of the house and senate there is still the question of whether Gov. Brown will sign it. Assisted suicide legislation isn't just opposed by Republicans, but also the Catholics. Gov. Brown, a former Jesuit school student, will more than likely oppose the bill but may still sign it into law anyway.

Hypocrisies and Ironies and Lies – Oh My!

What do Ted Cruz, John McCain and Barrack Obama have in common? None of them were born in the United States. Ted Cruz was born in Canada, John McCain in Panama, and everyone knows that Barack Obama was born in Kenya.

Well, actually President Obama was born in Hawaii but, ironically, it has been Sen. Cruz' most ardent supporters, the Tea Party, pointing fingers at President Obama--claiming he is an illegitimate president because he wasn't born in the United States. Sen. Cruz says it doesn't matter that he was born in Canada because his mother is an American citizen. No one has ever questioned Obama's mother's citizenship as an American.

So what gives?

This is just going to be the start of a long and frustrating campaign of contradictions, hypocrisies and ironies swirling around Sen. Cruz, not to mention a very painful process for the GOP. Right now Sen. Cruz is the most unpopular senator in congress, even with his own party. Sen. McCain has referred to him as a "wacko bird."

First, there is the constitution. Sen. Cruz makes it the lynchpin of his presidential campaign. But what did the constitution say about the separation of church and state? How can Sen. Cruz stand on the constitution and then open his presidential campaign at a Liberty University, a place that offers "a world-class Christian education" for the purpose of "training champions for Christ?" Did he miss the history lesson that explained that even the majority of our founding fathers were not Christian? During his announcement speech he declared he was going to be the uncompromising champion for Christian evangelical voters. So I guess everyone else, including our founding fathers, can just piss off.

Sen. Cruz' biggest problem, though, is campaigning like a devout Catholic and then trying to pretend to walk like a devout Catholic. His hardline stance on immigration flies in the face of his religion. Giving sanctuary is a tenet of the Catholic Church, but he doesn't even have compassion to protect children who were brought here when children. He talks of family values, but despite the Pope's pleas for compassion for immigrants, he wants families torn apart by deporting the parents of American-born children.

Of course many Republican Catholics are in the same boat as Sen. Cruz in regard to immigration and climate change. The Pope is scheduled to speak to congress in September and is "preparing a major document, called an encyclical, on the environment. It is likely to reiterate his frequent calls for governments and individuals to take steps to combat climate change, a phenomenon he attributes in part to human activity," according to the *Religious News Service*.

"Because it is snowing in New Hampshire" as Senator Inhofe sniffed, may fool a few Americans that climate change is not for real, but the Pope is not going to be amused. The Pope said, "if you are a Christian, protecting the environment is part of your identity, not an ideological option. A Christian who does not protect creation is a Christian who does not care about the work of God; that work that was born from the love of God for us."

The Political Plot Thickens

What other updates are there in a presidential campaign that hasn't officially started?

Senator Rand Paul was a little annoyed that Sen. Cruz stole his thunder because he plans on announcing in two weeks. They share a similar religious base. Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker continues to do very well in the polls, often leading the pack. Gov. Walker does have some scandals involving campaign finance that will get more press once his honeymoon is over. As for New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, even his enemies have thrown in the towel--most notably former Colorado Congressman Tom Tancredo, who had formed a PAC just to fundraise against him. Mr. Tancredo gave it up because, "The guy doesn't have a chance." There is even a New Jersey Against Chris Christie Facebook page.

Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee is also doing well in the polls, and he should be. Most people have forgotten that Mr. Huckabee won eight states in the Republican primary in 2008, more than Mitt Romney. Mr. Huckabee may be the number one reason Sen. Cruz announced when he did and where he did – to corner the religious right. But Mr. Huckabee is the real deal. He not only talks the talk but walks the walk.

While Sen. Cruz has temporarily cornered the religious vote, Jeb Bush has cornered all the money. And that is where my column should probably end. When a candidate has cornered the money, its game over.

A well-spoken reader who hates my column and probably won't be reading it again, commented about last issue's Political Fix:

"Interestingly, you mention only two candidates for POTUS (Hilary and Jeb) as if it has already been decided. This is precisely the point I raised regarding the media and politics. I feel the media increasingly oversteps its place in politics and in deciding elections and who they endorse. While the two you mentioned might very well be in the next election, I for one, can only hope America can do better than that. It is my hope that one day the media will sit back and let the people decide who they put in office."

YOUR
DIRECT LINE
TO YOUR MEDICAL INFORMATION

INTRODUCING SIERRA VIEW'S
MYVIEW PATIENT PORTAL

Sierra View Medical Center is proud to introduce our **MyVIEW Patient Portal**, a secure way to access health information. Look up vital records from the comfort of your own home by enrolling in and accessing our Patient Portal.

Visit the MyVIEW Patient Portal page on our website to see how you can: update personal information; review your medication list, diagnoses, and conditions; review imaging reports and lab results; and review your health report summary!

SIERRA VIEW
MEDICAL CENTER
MyVIEW Patient Portal

465 W. Putnam Ave. | Porterville, CA
(559) 784-1110 | www.sierra-view.com/patientportal

Jim Holly, left, and Kevin McPhaill.

Sierra Bancorp CEO Succession Finalized

Staff Reports

The Board of Directors of Sierra Bancorp, the holding company for Bank of the Sierra, today announced that it has officially appointed Kevin McPhaill as President and Chief Executive Officer, effective April 1, 2015. On the same day, the founding bank President, James C. Holly, will officially enter retirement, but continue on the Board of Directors as Vice Chairman.

Locally born and raised, McPhaill grew up in Tulare County and attended Fresno Pacific University for his undergraduate degree, and earned his MBA with a concentration in Finance at Fresno State University. Additionally, McPhaill graduated from the Graduate School of Banking at Southern Methodist University. McPhaill has been in the banking industry for 24 years, including 14 years with Bank of the Sierra, and in his most recent role at the bank, McPhaill held the position of President and Chief Operating Officer. McPhaill also holds a seat on the bank's Board of Directors.

"I am privileged to have worked with Jim for the past several years and have come to admire his leadership, energy and drive," stated McPhaill. "I congratulate him on an exceptional banking career that spans over 50 years, including nearly 38 years as CEO of Bank of the Sierra. I am honored to move into this role and I am committed to working with our team as we realize our full potential," continued McPhaill.

"As we transition to a new President, the Board of Directors and I have full confidence in Kevin and his abilities," mentioned Holly. "Kevin has demonstrated outstanding leadership skills and a true passion for customer service. With the top-level leadership we have in place, Bank of the Sierra is well positioned for future growth and high performance."

Early in his banking career, Holly was instrumental in starting the Porterville, California based bank in 1977, and maintained his role as the bank's CEO for nearly 38 years. Holly has seen Bank of the Sierra flourish from a small, single office bank to a 28 branch multi-community bank. Through multiple recessions, and a corporate building fire in the early 90's, Holly and his team have managed to generate a profit every year since 1982. Sierra Bancorp is the largest publicly-traded financial institution headquartered in Tulare County and is traded on NASDAQ (BSRR). Although Holly will retire as CEO, he will continue on as a director and will retain all current Board committee assignments. In addition, he was appointed Vice Chairman of the Board for both Sierra Bancorp and the Bank, with oversight for merger and acquisition activities, effective April 1, 2015.

Rep. Nunes Bids Farewell to Chief of Staff

The office of Congressmen Devin Nunes (CA-22) has announced that its long-time chief of staff, Johnny Amaral, will leave the Nunes team to work for Westlands Water District.

Having run Rep. Nunes' first successful campaign for Congress in 2001, Amaral has served as his chief of staff since 2002 and has acted as Rep. Nunes' top advisor for many of his most important initiatives. In addition to overseeing Rep. Nunes' staff, Amaral has been a key participant in negotiations over water supplies, public lands, and other pivotal issues.

"This has been, by far, the most rewarding job I've ever had," said Amaral. "I've had the privilege of meeting a huge number of our constituents and working with the most incredible people in the Central Valley. It was a tough decision to leave this office and our amazing staff, and to part ways with Devin, who is one of my best friends. But I'm looking forward to a new opportunity with Westlands to continue pursuing one of my main goals of the past thirteen years – to end the man-made drought in the Central Valley."

Amaral will join Westlands with the title of Deputy General Manager for External Relations. He will draw upon more than a decade of experience working on water issues, having developed long-standing relationships with Valley families and farmers as well as policymakers and principal stakeholders at the local, state, and federal levels.

"Johnny has been crucial to my efforts, both in our home district and in Washington," said Congressman Nunes. "He has deep knowledge of all the key issues facing Central Valley communities, and has handled even the most difficult problems with absolute professionalism and a dose of good humor. I commend my good friend for his many years of service to the people of the 22nd District. While I'm sad to lose Johnny, I think his hiring by Westlands is a positive sign that the water district intends to take a more engaged, pro-active approach to solving the water crisis."

Amaral will begin at Westlands on May 1. He will be replaced as Rep. Nunes' chief of staff by Anthony Ratekin, who will rejoin the Nunes staff after previously serving as field representative. Like Amaral, Ratekin was born and raised in the Central Valley and will be based in the Clovis and Visalia offices.

Group Calls for Governor to Ban Fracking to Protect Water Supply

Following Gov. Brown's announcement that he is seeking additional funds to deal with California's water shortage as the state enters its fourth year of severe drought, Tim Molina of the Courage Campaign issued the following statement on behalf Californians Against Fracking:

"If the Governor and the State Water Board are really serious about protecting California's water supply, the Governor needs to ban fracking and other oil extraction techniques that are lacing great quantities of water with toxic chemicals. These techniques permanently poison and remove millions of gallons of water from the water cycle every day, and produce massive amounts of waste. The oil industry destroys in one day the amount of water that 12 families would use in a year.

State regulators recently admitted that for decades they have allowed hundreds of injection wells to illegally dispose oil industry wastewater into protected aquifers, contaminating precious drinking and irrigation water. Oil industry wastewater can contain high levels of benzene and other harmful chemicals as well as fracking waste. Protecting and conserving water is critical to California's future. If Gov. Brown wants to effectively address our dwindling water supplies, he needs to ban fracking immediately."

Californians Against Fracking is a coalition of about 200 environmental business, health, agriculture, labor, political and environmental justice organizations working to win a statewide ban on fracking.

Water

Continued from p. 1

communities have boards that are comprised of volunteer members that have varying degrees of experience and knowledge accessing these programs and funding streams. There is also an opportunity to help communities identify instances where resources could be shared across several communities or a region, however, because of the silo nature of the communities it is difficult to make those connections.

- Solution: Establishing a one-stop shop in a region for communities and residents as a starting point for programs, funding streams, information and support would vastly improve access, regional planning efforts and drive better and more sustainable solutions.

5. Continue Pre-Planning and Local Entity Formation Assistance Programs

- Challenge: The initial round of pre-planning and Local Entity Formation Assistance (LEFA) was heavily pursued and quickly over-subscribed. This is demonstrative of the acute necessity of the two programs.
- Solution: Re-authorize funds for the Pre-planning and LEFA programs. Include additional funding caps for regional solutions based on the number of communities included in the regional effort.

To review the County's detailed list of water priorities, as well as the full Tulare Lake Basin Disadvantaged Community Water Study including all 59 recommendations, please go to www.tularelakebasin.com.

Brown's SHOE FIT CO.
734-4152
201 W. Main St. Visalia

Famous name brands: Birkenstock, Born, Dansko, Yellow Box, Taos and many more!

Open Mon.–Sat. 9 am–6 pm

For one of the best selections of footwear in the Valley!

Apartments available
Casa Grande
Senior Care Home & Assisted Living
www.casagrandeseniorcarehomes.com
347 E. Walnut, Visalia (559) 733-0233

Congress Tackles 'Waters of the U.S.' Proposed Rule

Christine Souza, CFBF

With a proposed "waters of the U.S." rule set to be finalized sometime this spring, the issue remains an important topic for farmers and ranchers in states including California and for representatives in Washington, D.C. The proposal comes up for discussion this week by the Senate Agriculture Committee and was the subject of a hearing by a House Agriculture subcommittee last week on its potential impact on rural America.

The proposed WOTUS rule would redefine and expand the scope of waters protected under the federal Clean Water Act. Ultimately, critics say, it would expand the jurisdiction of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers over farmland.

California Farm Bureau Federation federal policy consultant Erin Huston said Farm Bureau is concerned about the impact the rule would have on family farmers and ranchers.

"If finalized, this rule would significantly expand the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act and place landowners under an uncertain amount of liability," Huston said.

At the House Agriculture subcommittee hearing last week, the American Farm Bureau Federation said that unless dramatically altered, the WOTUS rule would result in potential Clean Water Act liability and federal permit requirements for a large number of commonplace and essential farming, ranching and forestry practices.

AFBF General Counsel Ellen Steen told subcommittee members the WOTUS rule would create enormous uncertainty and vulnerability for farmers and ranchers nationwide.

"It is impossible to know how many farmers, ranchers and forest landowners will be visited by (EPA) enforcement staff or will be sued by citizen plaintiffs' lawyers—and it is impossible to know when those inspections and lawsuits will happen," Steen said. "But what is certain is that a vast number of common, responsible farming, ranching and forestry practices that occur today without the need for a federal permit would be highly vulnerable to Clean Water Act enforcement under this rule."

According to Steen, several statutory exemptions in the Clean Water Act demonstrate a clear determination by Congress not to impose regulation on ordinary farming and ranching activities. However, she said, agency and judicial interpretations during the past several decades have significantly limited the agricultural exemptions that have traditionally insulated farming and ranching from Clean Water Act permit requirements.

"Much of the remaining benefit of those exemptions would be eliminated by an expansive interpretation of 'waters of the United States' to cover ditches and drainage paths that run across and nearby farm and pasture lands," Steen testified. "The result would be wide-scale litigation risk and potential Clean Water Act liability for innumerable, routine farming and ranching activities that occur today without the need for cumbersome and costly Clean Water Act permits."

Steen explained that because ditches and ephemeral drainages are ubiquitous on farm and ranch lands—running alongside and even within farm fields and pastures—"the proposed rule will make it impossible for many farmers to apply fertilizer or crop-protection products to those fields without triggering Clean Water Act 'pollutant' discharge liability and permit requirements."

Members of the House Committee on Agriculture asserted that the administration has acted on its own, without input from the states and stakeholders, to broaden the scope of the act.

"The EPA's proposed rule could have serious consequences for our nation and prove to be a severe detriment to our economy, with a particularly strong impact in rural counties," said Rep. Glenn Thompson, R-Pa., chairman of the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry. "Hasty movement from the EPA will only invite costly litigation, burden states and counties with compliance costs, and create obstacles to building and replacing our national infrastructure."

At a separate event last week, EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy apologized to farmers in Kansas for the agency's bumpy rollout of the WOTUS proposal.

"I really wish we had done a better job of rolling out the clean water rule," McCarthy said. "I'm really concerned that we weren't crystal clear not only about what we intended to do, but also what we weren't intending to do."

Earlier this year, the EPA and the Army Corps withdrew an "interpretive rule" that had narrowed a Section 404 exemption of the Clean Water Act by tying it to mandatory compliance with previously voluntary Natural Resources Conservation Service standards.

(Christine Souza is an assistant editor of Ag Alert. She may be contacted at csouza@cfbf.com.)

This article courtesy the California Farm Bureau Federation.

Legislature to Act on Emergency Drought Package

David Kranz, CFBF

By the end of this week, the state Legislature is likely to pass a package of emergency drought legislation intended to provide partial relief to a state feeling the impacts of a fourth consecutive dry year. The package includes more than $1 billion for local drought relief and water infrastructure projects, through a combination of accelerated spending from the governor's budget and money approved by voters in two bond measures.

In introducing the drought legislation last week, Gov. Brown and legislative leaders from both parties emphasized the need to act immediately, as a dry winter transitions into spring. Brown said the legislation would provide "direct relief to workers and communities most impacted by these historic dry conditions."

California Farm Bureau Federation President Paul Wenger thanked Brown and legislative leaders for their attention to the crisis and urged the state to move quickly to provide aid to rural residents whose livelihoods have been harmed by water shortages.

"Many California farmers face water cutbacks of 80 to 100 percent, and water shortages will force hundreds of thousands of acres of productive farmland to be idled," Wenger said. "Tens of thousands of jobs will be lost on farms and in packinghouses and other rural businesses. People who work in those jobs form the backbone of our state's rural economies, and we appreciate the state's efforts to help them through this difficult time."

The drought legislation includes, for example, $17 million in additional funding to support emergency food aid to communities harmed by the drought, $4 million for emergency drinking water in disadvantaged communities and a separate $5 million outlay to provide emergency drinking water support for small communities, including help with private wells.

In addition, the drought legislation includes $10 million for the California Department of Food and Agriculture, to be dedicated to its State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program. SWEEP provides grants to agricultural operations to help them implement water conservation measures designed to increase water efficiency and reduce greenhouse-gas emissions.

Under the legislation, CDFA would also receive $200,000 to study the impacts of the drought on agriculture and agricultural communities.

CFBF Director of Water Resources Danny Merkley noted that the drought legislation will not make additional water available. But in the meantime, he said, "we have to find ways to reoperate the existing system to allow more flexibility to respond to drought."

The drought legislation includes $2.8 million for what sponsors called "additional modeling support and species tracking" in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and the Central Valley, to support efficient management of the water system.

Based on passage of previous emergency legislation a year ago, Merkley said, quick action by the Legislature and governor would make money available beginning later this spring and summer.

While tackling the short-term crisis, CFBF President Wenger said, the state should also adapt the water system to meet future needs.

"Many people who study the climate say we may have more years such as this, with California receiving a few heavy rainstorms and not much snow," he said. "We need to have the reservoirs in place to capture more of those heavy rain flows, especially if we can't count on the Sierra snowpack. This winter, millions of acre-feet of water flowed to the ocean that might have been captured for later use."

He encouraged the state to move as quickly as possible to approve and build new storage, noting that California voters made it clear they want the state to build new surface storage through their passage of the Proposition 1 water bond last year.

"That bond money needs to be put to work as quickly as possible," Wenger said. "Several projects have been identified that would allow California to capture runoff from strong storms like those we've had this winter, which would make future droughts less punishing. It's time to stop studying and start building."

In announcing her support for the emergency drought legislation, Assembly Republican Leader Kristin Olsen expressed similar frustration.

"Projects to increase water supply have been hung up in government red tape for decades," Olsen said, adding that she hopes the state would "take real actions on long-term projects so emergency actions are no longer needed."

The drought legislation would accelerate $267 million from the Proposition 1 bond for safe drinking water and water recycling projects. It would also accelerate $660 million in money from an earlier water bond, Proposition 1E, for flood protection projects intended to make water infrastructure "more resilient," in order to capture high flows from intense rainstorms that can occur even during dry years, sponsors said.

(Dave Kranz is editor of Ag Alert. He may be contacted at dkranz@cfbf.com.)

This article courtesy the California Farm Bureau Federation.

Farm Leader: Emergency Legislation Underscores Drought Crisis

California Farm Bureau Federation

Emergency drought legislation introduced at the state Capitol underscores the ongoing crisis facing California's rural communities, according to the president of the California Farm Bureau Federation. CFBF President Paul Wenger thanked Gov. Brown and legislative leaders for their attention to the crisis and urged the state to move quickly to provide aid to rural residents whose livelihoods have been harmed by water shortages. Wenger also encouraged the state to move as quickly as possible to approve and build new water storage.

"Many California farmers face water cutbacks of 80 to 100 percent, and water shortages will force hundreds of thousands of acres of productive farmland to be idled," Wenger said. "Tens of thousands of jobs will be lost on farms and in packinghouses and other rural businesses. People who work in those jobs form the backbone of our state's rural economies, and we appreciate the state's efforts to help them through this difficult time."

While tackling the short-term crisis, Wenger said, the state should also improve management of existing water infrastructure and adapt it to meet future needs.

"Many people who study the climate say we may have more years such as this, with California receiving a few heavy rainstorms and not much snow," he said. "We need to have the reservoirs in place to capture more of those heavy rain flows, especially if we can't count on the Sierra snowpack. This winter, millions of acre-feet of water flowed to the ocean that might have been captured for later use."

Wenger noted that California voters made it clear they want the state to build new surface storage, through their passage of the Proposition 1 water bond last year.

"That bond money needs to be put to work as quickly as possible," he said. "Several projects have been identified that would allow California to capture runoff from strong storms like those we've had this winter, which would make future droughts less punishing. It's time to stop studying and start building."

The California Farm Bureau Federation works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of more than 57,000 members statewide and as part of a nationwide network of more than 6.2 million Farm Bureau members.

COS Academy Accepting Applications

College of the Sequoias is now accepting sign-ups for the 134th Law Enforcement Academy Class scheduled for the fall semester, 2015. This class will continue our proud tradition of law enforcement training at COS which began with the 1st Academy Class in 1962. Enrollment in the police academy is open to all qualified individuals. Current employment with a law enforcement agency is not required.It is estimated that California will see an average of 2,570 police/deputy sheriff vacancies annually over the next seven years (CA-EDD). Most law enforcement agencies now require that applicants for peace officer positions must already have completed their academy training. Currently, dozens of law enforcement agencies conduct on-site recruitment in the academy beginning the first week of training. Agencies are looking for talented people with a history of good performance, but will not consider applicants with extensive criminal records or a lifestyle of drug use.

This 934-hour POST certified Intensive course begins on August 10, 2015, and requires attendance Monday-Friday at the COS Hanford Educational Center through January, 2016. The intensive academy is for individuals who can attend training an average of 40 hours per week and devote their evenings to studies. Requirements to enter the program include: 18 years of age, possession of a high school diploma or GED certificate, no felony convictions, passing score on the academy entrance exam and the academy physical agility test, possession of a valid CA Driver's License, fingerprint clearance from the State of California and a medical clearance from a licensed physician.

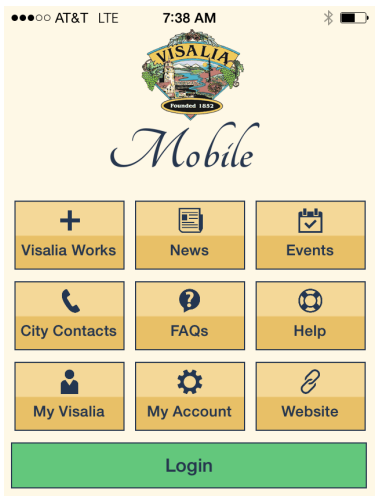
To begin the process, candidates need to register for one of two testing dates scheduled for May, 2015. On-line registration can be found on the College of the Sequoia's website (www.cos.edu) under the "Hanford Center" tab. Then follow the links "Course and Programs" to "Police Academy." Registration for testing must be completed by May 1, 2015, or until seating is full. Candidates who achieve a passing score on the written test will then be invited to participate in the physical agility test.

For more information on the Academy, view the website or contact the Public Safety Training Office, 559-583-2600.

City Launches VisaliaMobile App

Staff Reports

As part of the City of Visalia's newly designed website with user-friendly features customized to visitors' own unique needs, the Visalia Mobile app has been launched. This fast, easy-to-use and free access to useful information allows residents to submit non-emergency service requests such as graffiti removal, pothole and sidewalk repairs, park and facility maintenance, and more.



"VisaliaMobile joins the city's newly designed website, Visalia.City, and Visalia Works to provide up-to-date technology that makes information citizens want and need available on a multitude of mediums," said Community Relations Manager Nancy Loliva. VisaliaMobile, the Mobile SmartPhone app for IOS/Android, platforms one of the newest software being produced by Civica, the city's website vendor. It features service request functions, but news, events, city contacts, My Visalia, FAQs and website icons to access information literally in the palm of your hand.

VisaliaMobile includes the following features.

- Access to the City of Visalia's newly designed website at www.visalia.city in a responsive layout adaptable to any mobile device.
- The ability to manage your favorite pages, news, events and notifications with 'My Visalia', a resident portal allowing residents and visitors to personalize the website to deliver only the information they want – while keeping everything else just a few clicks away.
- Access to Visalia Works, the web-based mobile request and issue management system which allows citizens to easily submit requests for information, access trouble and violation reports online and, if they desire, receive email, phone or mail acknowledgements and updates.
- Read the City News Feed, driven by the main website feed, for all the latest news from the City of Visalia.
- Save the date for any city event with a feed from the City's Calendar.
- A complete list of city contacts provides you with easy access!
- If there's a question on a city service, you'll find the answer in FAQs.

For more information, contact Nancy Loliva at 559-713-4535, or at nloliva@ci.visalia.ca.us.

Boundaries

Continued from p. 1

2014-34. The legal requirements are: equal population in each district; comply with the Federal Voting Rights Act, and race cannot be the 'predominate factor' in the drawing of lines.

The traditional "good government" criteria approved by Council to develop districts include: keep together communities of interest, including school and park-connected neighborhoods, rural or urban populations, city planning areas, social interests and agricultural, industrial, or service industry interests; use visible features as district boundaries where possible; keep districts compact and contiguous; avoid pairing incumbents; and accommodate planned population growth to the degree possible.

An initial round of community forums was held on Sept. 25 and 30, to help the public understand the process and the criteria to be used to draw the districts. Free public participation kits were made available on the website and at City Hall to provide the tools to the public to enable them to submit their own boundary proposal for discussion and consideration by citizens and the City Council.

A total of 12 maps were submitted by the public from Oct. 1 through Nov. 14. These maps, and their demographic summaries, were posted on the City's website for public review. Those plans, along with three other plans prepared by the City's districting consultant (NDC), were presented to Council on Dec. 2, 2014, and the map authors provided the thoughts and goals behind their plans to Council.

Two additional outreach meetings were held Jan. 20 and 28 to allow the public the opportunity to review all of the maps, to comment on what they liked and disliked about each map, and to submit any additional maps. The second series of outreach meetings focused on gathering public input on the draft plans developed in the earlier public engagement process. The City conducted an extensive public notification campaign for each round of public forums. The discussion at each of these forums was in-depth and provided useful input defining communities of interest in the city and comparing the relative merits of the plans.

For more information, visit the City's website, www.visalia.city.

Endangered Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Restored to Sequoia and Yosemite National Parks

A multiagency operation was recently concluded that returned two herds of endangered bighorn sheep to locations in Sequoia and Yosemite National Parks. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Yosemite, Sequoia, and Kings Canyon National Parks, Inyo National Forest, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, worked together on the complex operation in the Sierra Nevada.

Between March 26 and March 29, nine ewes (females) and three rams (males) were moved from the Inyo National Forest and Sequoia National Park to the Cathedral Range in Yosemite National Park. In addition, seven ewes were moved to the Laurel Creek area of Sequoia National Park; the plan was for the CDFW to attempt to move an additional 3 rams to that area on March 30.

The Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep is the only federally endangered mammal in Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon. This animal was listed in 2000 after the population plunged to a low of about 100 individuals. The population has since increased to more than 600, which marks an important milestone toward their recovery. Prior to the arrival of western settlers, which brought unregulated hunting and diseases in their livestock, bighorn sheep populations likely numbered in the thousands.

This latest chapter in the multi-year recovery effort involved the capture of Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep in wilderness areas on these federally managed lands. CDFW staff and volunteers, as well as veterinarians, biologists and staff from other agencies, assessed the health and safety of the animals throughout the entire process. Each animal was fitted with a radio collar and a Global Positioning System (GPS) collar in order to track its movements during the next several years.

The newly released bighorn sheep are expected to thrive in their new homes because both of these historically occupied areas have superb summer habitat with adequate forage, are close enough to other Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep to provide the potential for connectivity among herds, and are far enough from most domestic sheep grazing areas to provide a buffer from potential disease transmission.

"This is a legacy event for Yosemite National Park and the bighorn sheep," said Don Neubacher, Yosemite National Park Superintendent. "Additionally, this is one of the Signature Centennial projects for the National Park Service and we are ecstatic to see bighorn sheep in the Cathedral Range for the first time in more than 100 years."

"This project would not have been possible without the leadership of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and strong interagency cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service," said Woody Smeck, Superintendent of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

"With this week's reintroductions, we now have bighorn distributed throughout all geographic areas identified as critical habitat in the Recovery Plan," said Tom Stephenson, leader of the Recovery Program with CDFW.

Yosemite Conservancy funded equipment and experts to bring the new herd into Yosemite National Park, as well as the GPS collars to track the animals' movement and location. During the past 20 years, Yosemite Conservancy has funded nearly $630,000 to help protect bighorn sheep by supporting research, translocation efforts, radio and GPS collars. The Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Foundation and the Wild Sheep Foundation funded the translocation into Sequoia National Park.

> *"This is a legacy event for Yosemite National Park and the bighorn sheep."*
>
> Don Neubacher, Yosemite National Park Superintendent

"Bighorn sheep are a true symbol of wilderness and represent the need to protect wild lands," said Frank Dean, Yosemite Conservancy President. "With the reintroduction, visitors will experience a wilderness similar to that found in the days of John Muir, when large alpine wildlife was abundant."

Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep are well known for their large size, strength and ability to negotiate precipitous terrain. Rams stand over three feet tall at the shoulder and weigh up to 220 pounds; Ewes weigh up to 155 pounds. Both rams and ewes have permanent horns; rams' horns are massive and coiled, whereas ewes' horns are shorter with less curvature. Bighorn sheep display a range of body coloration, from dark brown to almost white, and have a large white rump patch and a short, dark tail.

Rams live to be 10 to 12 years old, and ewes live to be 12 to 17 years old. During breeding season (rut), bighorn rams compete for their right to mate with ewes. Dominance behavior includes kicking, butting, neck wrestling and dramatic horn clashes that sound like thunder. Breeding generally takes place in November. Starting at two years old, ewes give birth to one lamb between late April and mid-June. Mothers typically wean their lambs by five months of age. The lambs become independent of their mothers when they are about one year old.

Recently released Bighorn Sheep graze in their new territory within Sequoia National Park. Photo courtesy National Park Service

Forest

Continued from p. 1

will be doing an aerial survey by low-flying plane to scope out the species of trees under duress and amount of damage. In the meantime the service will be asking residents to clear hazardous fuels by their homes.

Supervisor Steve Worthley protested the fact that the forest service spoke of long term goals.

"We are in an emergency right now. You are Tulare County's largest landowner with 1.1 million acres. What can you do right now," he asked.

Worthley reminded Elliot of a major fire in Southern California at the beginning of the new millennium. It happened in the San Bernardino Mountains and was referred to as the 2003 Firestorm. It was the second largest fire in California's history and Worthley was wondering why we couldn't learn the lessons that fire had to teach and not let history repeat itself.

Elliot asked for the supervisors' patience until they can access the magnitude of the threat. He explained that we are not alone. This is a threat throughout Northern California to Washington and over to the Rockies.

"This is a problem that affects all the western states and we will need to work with congress," Elliot said.

"The choir will get louder" he said, but the money allocated by congress is insufficient and will run out fast once the fire season starts.

Worthley acknowledged that the western states were all suffering but, "this is our back yard."

"I don't see the government agency treating this like an emergency," he said "This is a wildfire; it's just burning a little slower. What is going to have to happen for you to treat it like an emergency."

Worthley explained that the forest service is only dealing with a few thousand acres around homes and communities while ignoring the other million acres.

Last year's Rim Fire would look like a Girl Scouts' marshmallow roast compared to what could happen throughout the Sierra Nevada this summer. During the Rim Fire, the forest service made a priority to save Hetch Hetchy Dam and the Giant Sequoia Grove. Worthley suggested that Elliot use the same premise of saving the Sequoias, when working with Congress to get funding for prevention.

> *"Sequoias are fire resistant but they won't be resistant to a holocaust."*
>
> Tulare County Supervisor Steve Worthley

"Sequoias are fire resistant but they won't be resistant to a holocaust," he said.

The Sequoia National Monument was created for the express purpose to protect the Giant Sequoias. It is time Congress starts protecting Tulare County's most precious asset through increased funding, Supervisor Alan Ishida said.

Worthley lamented that Tulare County has no saw mills left to harvest the dying timber. Not only are the dying trees a hazard, but they are marketable timber. The forest service could use the money from the sale of the timber to pay for fire prevention. If a dead tree is not harvested within the year it is useless. Not only is the county losing the income from selling the wood but the huge amount of dead trees will provide an immense source of fuel during a forest fire.

Elliot's hands are tied when it comes to harvesting the timber. It's not just the fuel on the ground, but the dying trees still standing. Elliot explained the forest is under an immense amount of stress because it is overcrowded.

But, the logging industry blames the Forest Service for the fact they have not been able to thin out the number of trees. According to The Fresno Bee, a logging supervisor out of Terra Bella said that in the 1850's there were 20 to 30 trees per acre. Now there are 300 trees per acre. The density also magnifies the impact of the bark beetle on the forest.

With 50 percent of the trees dead, said Supervisor Phil Cox. It is too bad that the Washington, DC officials cannot see it.

"This is a fire incident just waiting to happen. My frustration is that we have to beg for assistance that won't happen until we have a fire," he said.

Resources need to be dedicated now for prevention.

"I hope that we are not sitting here next year talking about the fire that happened," he said.

Coincidently, the board is planning a Washington, DC trip for the week of April 20. Chairman Worthley, Supervisor Ishida, Supervisor Ennis and County Administrative Officer Jean Rousseau will participate.

The supervisors hope to meet with Rep. Kevin McCarthy, Rep. Devin Nunes, Rep. David Valadao, Senator Barbara Boxer and Senator Dianne Feinstein. Though many topics will be addressed, the dire situation facing the Sequoia National Forest will be tantamount. Elliot will be providing the supervisors with the materials needed to explain to the representatives how serious the situation is in the National Forest and help the delegation secure funding for prevention.

Tulare County PAC Holds First Event at Visalia Convention Center

Tony Maldonado

The Tulare County PAC held its first event, the Roosevelt Gala, at the Visalia Convention Center on Saturday.

Catered by the Marriott hotel, the inaugural Roosevelt Gala drew approximately 140 attendees, sold 160 tickets ranging from $40-75, and generated a total of $11,000.

After losing State Treasurer John Chiang as keynote speaker, organizers invited Carlos Alcala, chairman of the California Democratic Party Chicano Latino Caucus, to speak at the event. Alcala spoke at length about how to increase voter turnout and take advantage of demographic shifts in the state, including holding voter registration drives at high schools.

Doug Kessler, Region 8 Director of the California Democratic Party, and Fred Davis, a founding member of the Visalia Democratic Club, were given awards for their support of progressive causes in Tulare County.

Former Tulare County Supervisor Lali Moheno and Joe Altschule, a local Democratic activist and Visalia Times-Delta columnist, were the PAC's honoroees at the gala.

The College of the Sequoias Jazz Ensemble played at the event, and Hope Patrick-Garcia of Mezcal sang "Greatest Love of All" and the national anthem. Fresno's Aideed Medina presented an original poem. The Central Valley Vietnam Veterans Color Guard presented the colors.

Victor Moheno served as master of ceremonies and TCPAC Chair Abigail Solis served as the event's host.

Numerous people and organizations purchased tables or otherwise supported the event:

- Carpenter's Local 1109, recognized as a silver sponsor
- Fred Davis
- Victor Moheno
- Tulare Democratic Club
- COS Young Democrats
- Visalia Unified Teachers Association
- Fresno Madera Tulare Kings Central Labor Council
- Fresno County Democratic Central Committee

The TCPAC was formed after disagreements between the Visalia Democratic Club and the Tulare County Democratic Central Committee regarding membership and fundraising, and the possibility of the VDC running afoul of state election laws.

While the PAC -- on its website and in its name -- does not mention the Democratic Party, its stated goal is to "work along side our supporters and progressive allies to turn our county Blue."

Abigail Solis, also president of the VDC, said she hopes to see some form of reunification with the Tulare County Democratic Central Committee, but that they also plan to continue hosting similar events in the future.

From left: Joe Altschule, Carlos Alcala, Fred Davis, Abigail Solis, Tom Chamberlin, Lali Moheno, Louie Campos, Doug Kessler, Victor Moheno.

Keynote speaker Carlos Alcala, Chairman of the California Democratic Party Chicano Latino Caucus.

Newmark Grubb
Pearson Commercial

AVAILABLE:

Office 6,168sf
$470,100 - $75/sf
Lease $3,700

Industrial 55,920sf
$13,980 - $0.25/sf

Service Commercial
2,000sf
$800 - $0.40sf

Ask for **Mike Porte**
(559)972-2421 BRE# 01075873

Visalia Chamber of Commerce to Host Annual State of the Chamber General Business Meeting

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce will host the State of the Chamber General Business Meeting on April 23rd at the Visalia Convention Center from 3-4pm. This event will feature a Question and Answer session with local entrepreneurs about the future of business in Visalia. Additionally, the Chamber will debut an exciting new video, logo and strategic direction while sharing key matter from 2014.

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce could not accomplish its mission without the support of local businesses, and the countless volunteers who give time and energy to assist the Chamber. The Chamber will publicly recognize many of these outstanding individuals. In particular the Chamber will recognize outgoing board members, the ambassador of the year, and committee chair persons. In addition the Chamber will recognize businesses who have reached significant membership anniversaries in 2014-2015.

In the last year the Chamber launched many new programs and initiatives which will be showcased in the 2014 Annual Report. However, the highlight of the meeting will be the unveiling of the Chambers new video, a new logo and the new office location during the meeting.

Following the State of the Chamber General Business Meeting the Chamber will host a Business Expo at the Visalia Convention Center from 4-7pm. The Business Expo will highlight more than 50 businesses and organizations from around Visalia.

For tickets to the State of the Chamber General Business Meeting go to www.visaliachamber.org or call the Chamber at 559-734-5876.

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce serves as the "voice of business" and provides strategic leadership and engagement in building the future of business and the community through information, services, and advocacy to the employers of our community.

Providers needed in Tulare County

Seeking loving individuals to support an adult with special needs.

Must have spare bedroom.
Complete application on site.
Receive up to $2,250+/mo.

Meet Wednesdays at 3pm.
3530 W. Mineral King Ave,#A
Visalia, CA 93291

Ask us about our referral bonus

California MENTOR Family Home Agency 559-636-2894

www.MentorsWanted.com

HADLEY-MARCOM
FUNERAL CHAPEL
Dignified & Affordable without Compromise

Scale back on price, not service

Complete Cremation $1,395 *
Complete Funeral $3,995 *
Including 20 gauge metal casket

General Price list is available at our funeral homes.

**Plus tax and cash advance items.*
**Based upon the purchase of a funeral package with this ad*
Prices effective as of March 1, 2015 and are subject to change without notice.

1700 W. Caldwell, Visalia
625–8900 FD2129

332 E. Visalia Rd., Farmersville
594–1063 FD2048

Carole Goldsmith Reappointed to California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley

Staff Reports

Carole Goldsmith, president of West Hills College Coalinga, has been reappointed to the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley.

Goldsmith has served since 2012 and has been an innovative force in higher education in the valley.

She helped secure $3 million in U.S. Department of Labor funding in 2010 to create the Pathways Out of Poverty Initiative, which focuses on green technology in rural Central California and was acknowledged by the Technical Assistance Partnership as a model program for data-driven decision making, partnership building and for employer engagement.

In 2011, she served as the principal investigator for a successful U.S. Department of Labor Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant, round one.

In 2012, she led the Central California Community Colleges Committed to Change Consortium in $19.9 million TAACCT grant educational reform efforts.

Goldsmith has been president of WHCC since January 2013 and has previously served as the campus' Vice Chancellor of Educational Services and Workforce Development and as the Director of Workforce Development and Vocational Education.

She also had a long career in education before coming to WHCC. She was the vice principal at the César E. Chávez Adult Education Center from 1999 to 2003 and was adjunct faculty and director of faculty training at the Bakersfield, Visalia and Fresno campuses of San Joaquin Valley College from 1998 to 1999.

Goldsmith also served as a teacher for the Washington Colony Elementary School District from 1996 to 1998 and as an instructor at California State University, Fresno from 1995 to 1998 during the summer session.

She was an adjunct business faculty member at the Heald College Schools of Business and Technology from 1995 to 1996 and program director at Social Vocational Services from 1991 to 1993.

This position does not require Senate confirmation and there is no compensation.

Goldsmith is the mother of two adult children, Chelsea Dobbs, 22, of San Luis Obispo and Chad Dobbs, who is currently serving in the army and is stationed in Atlanta, Georgia.

Democrats

Continued from p. 1

"They were reinstated because of a technicality," said TCDCC Chair Ruben Macareno. "We didn't send out the announcement in time."

The CDP's report also states the also TCDCC violated its own bylaws by failing to provide proper notice and not following its own procedure for removal of members. Additionally, the CDP reports the charges levied against the four members by the TCDCC -- including attempting to "harm the Central Committee," its reputation, well-being and work, among a long list of other alleged violations of TCDCC orders and confidentiality -- were too vague, containing no descriptions of specific actions of the individuals in question or the dates on which the alleged wrongdoing occurred. Further, the TCDCC unfairly placed the burden of proof on those accused of misconduct, the report said, requiring them to "show just cause why they should not be removed. ..."

Refusal to participate

When the four members being considered for sanction refused to participate in the TCDCC's attempt to remove them or their voting rights, the Executive Committee erroneously assumed the four had given up their right to due process by failing to appear for trial, the CDP finding states. The four were officially sanctioned by the TCDCC at a meeting held Jan. 22, 2015, however, the CDP found that meeting was also incorrectly noticed. The notice was distributed just one day prior to the meeting, and the agenda contained only a reference to an executive session to discuss a confidential matter.

"We (the four accused) came to the meeting in October. At the beginning, ... before going on the agenda, (Jack Gonzalez, vice chair of the TCDCC and chair of its Credentials Committee) announced the Credentials Committee had suspended us immediately, that we could not speak, ask questions, even members of the public were put on a gag order not to talk about the suspensions," said formerly removed member Susanne Gundy, "We were not allowed to see the evidence. We weren't allowed to have an attorney present. We declined to appear."

The four accused were not even aware their status was to be decided at the Jan. 22 meeting, Gundy said.

"We just happened to show up," she said. "I got that agenda the morning of the meeting. We didn't even know what it meant."

The four again declined to participate in the trial to decide their status as TCDCC members.

Aguilera-Marrero, a Tulare resident who ran an unsuccessful Democratic campaign for the 22nd Congressional District in the US House of Representatives in 2014, said although her voting rights with the TCDCC were suspended Oct. 22, 2014, she did not receive official notice of the charges against her until Feb. 2 of this year.

"I thought my due process was violated," she said. "Before I can defend myself, I have to know what I've done. I never got a copy of these charges until February second."

Charges leveled

The two sides in the conflict continue to maintain two very different stories about why the four were singled out for sanction. The charges levied against all four by the TCDCC include attempting to hampering the Committee's work and damaging its reputation. Other charges leveled individually include sharing TCDCC official business with nonmembers, distribution of confidential financial information, harassing TCDCC members, disrupting meetings, failing to follow confidentiality orders and recording TCDCC meetings without disclosure.

According to Gundy, the four were sanctioned because they raised questions about the TCDCC's finances and its reports to the state.

"What happened is as a result of a few meetings prior to (the Oct. 22 TCDCC meeting), (suspended TCDCC alternate member Albert Aguilar) looked into the financial statements. Al requested back reports and found irregularities."

Those included errors in accounting, as well as late reporting of monthly financial statements to the Secretary of State, she said.

"It was like lack of accountability," Gundy said. "There wasn't good accounting. The reports weren't filed in a timely basis."

In response, a special meeting to review the finances was called, and the four members later sanctioned were in attendance.

"A month or so later, we were all suspended. Is that a coincidence?" Gundy asked. "The four of us who asked questions were suspended. They said you're standing in the way of normal business by asking all these questions."

Source of errors

Macareno, however, said the inconsistencies were minor, citing a 9-cent error in one case, and said the tardy financial reports were made mostly before he assumed the TCDCC chair.

"Any little inaccuracy becomes a big deal with an agenda," he said. "Trust me, we don't have that much money. Everything can be accounted for."

In the wake of that meeting, the TCDCC has addressed the issues raised, Macareno said.

"We've hired an accounting firm to be our treasurer," he said.

Macareno lays blame for much of the late financial reporting at the feet of former TCDCC treasurer and suspended member Guadagnin, who suffered a stroke in June of 2013, after accepting the position in May of that year.

"Half of my chairmanship there was (late reporting)," Macareno said. "We had a lot of fees."

Citing her failing health, Guadagnin resigned as treasurer in September, 2013. The TCDCC Executive Committee, she said, refused to accept her resignation, forcing her to forward her resignation directly to the CDP.

"They (the TCDCC) fought it," she said. "I had to submit it to the state."

Following her resignation, Macareno assumed the treasurer position in addition to holding the chair. At the Oct. 22 meeting, TCDCC member Grace Calderon was elected treasurer for the body, but TCDCC did not submit notice of that change to the Secretary of State's office within the required reporting period, Guadagnin said, meaning Macareno remains in that position. Guadagnin also said she handed over all the TCDCC's financial documents to Macareno in September of 2013.

"I turned the reports over to him Sept. 25, 2013. He didn't pick them up until October," she said. "All they had to do was file the report. They've always tried to pin that on me."

Continuing investigation

Guadagnin, who is also a member of the Tulare County Grand Jury, said she and the others involved will continue to press for an investigation into TCDCC's finances.

"They filed one report at least a year late," she said. "They were out of balance every month. All we wanted to do was get the errors fixed and go on. That's when he (Macareno) started writing changes and removed us."

While Macareno said the TCDCC's bylaws have not been altered as the removed members and others have claimed, Guadagnin said the TCDCC bylaws have been changed this month. She also claims the TCDCC has not provided information about how its business was conducted while she was under sanction.

"I want the agenda, the minutes and treasurer's reports while I was expelled. They have not supplied that," Guadagnin said. "They do a lot of things behind the scenes. (At the most recent meeting) they wanted to have $2,000 or $4,000 approved for attorneys costs, but wouldn't say what it's for. They won't be transparent with the members. I want to know, and as a member I have a right to know."

The ongoing lack of transparency, she said, left little choice but to ask for outside intervention. When appealing to the CDP to remove the sanctions against them, those accused also called for an investigation of Macareno for his conduct as chair. The CDP declined to do so, as such action would be outside their legal reach, its report said.

"We're going to file a complaint with the Secretary of State," Guadignan said. "There are financial irregularities with the Committee."

Conflict of personalities

Macareno maintains the charges leveled against him are the result of a personality conflict among the membership and that he continues to have the full confidence of the TCDCC.

"I have unanimous support of the Committee," he said. "It's just personality problems with more than one person. If they don't like me, there's not much I can do about that. I'm true to my convictions."

And, he feels the actions of those sanctioned were not in line with the best interests of the TCDCC and its membership, but said the TCDCC will not appeal the CDP's decision or make another immediate attempt to remove those previously sanctioned.

"I still feel very strongly about that. They purposefully went out to undermine the Central Committee. That's what the trial was all about," Macareno said. "There won't be another attempt (to remove members). But, if we find another reason, we won't hesitate."

Despite apparently lingering bad feelings on all sides, those involved seem ready to return to business as usual.

"We're going to move forward as a committee," Macareno said. "We're going to do what we need to do. We all want the same thing in the end."

Gundy echoed that sentiment.

"I feel good to be back," she said. "I want to know what's going on. Having a viable central committee is very important."

Briefly...

SEARCH FOR NEW WEST HILLS COLLEGE LEMOORE PRESIDENT BEGINS

The nationwide search for a new president for West Hills College Lemoore has begun.

WHCL is conducting the search following an announcement in January that current president Don Warkentin would be retiring by the end of 2015.

Warkentin has served as the college's president since 2004.

For more information about the search and to learn more about what the college is looking for in a candidate, visit http://www.westhillscollege.com/presidential-search/.

SPRING INTO SUMMER READING WITH AAUW BOOK SALE

The members of Visalia Branch of America Association of University Women (AAUW) are finishing preparations for this year's spring book sale—the first of two held each year.

This all-volunteer tradition has been going on since early in the 1960's and has raised more than $300,000. The earnings are given to local students—both women and men attending College of the Sequoias—as scholarships to transfer to four-year colleges or to enter vocational programs such as the COS Nursing program. Some of the money is used to send 8th grade girls to science and math camp, and some is used to bring students in grades 4 – 6 to visit college for a day.

All books sold have been donated. There are fiction and nonfiction, cookbooks, hobby books, religious books, children's books--books, in fact, of every category. In addition, there are DVD's, CD's and books on tape. Cost is $2 for hardcover books and $1 for paperbacks. This year there are even some puzzles.

The book sale opens on Wednesday, April 15, with a preview night from 6 – 8pm. People may come and browse or buy for double the price. The regular sale begins on April 16 and ends on April 22. Hours are the Sequoia Mall regular hours.

The current location, where the AAUW members sort and store books, is unavailable after this book sale. If anybody in the community has access to a location that the members can use in the future, call Elaine Smith at 734-4780.

KAWEAH DELTA TO HOST APRIL 10 BLOOD DRIVE

Kaweah Delta Health Care District is hosting its semi-annual blood drive for the Central California Blood Center on Friday, April 10, in Visalia.

The blood drive will take place from 10am to 3pm inside the Blue Room (basement) of Kaweah Delta Medical Center, 400 W. Mineral King Ave. This drive is open to the general public. Anyone who gives blood will be entered for a chance to win a beachcruiser donated by Visalia Cyclery. An RSVP is requested by calling 559-624-5283 or by e-mail at supatel@kdhcd.org.

Blood donation takes less than one hour to complete. Donors must be in good general health and be at least 17 years old (16 years old with written parental consent). Senior citizens are encouraged to donate, as there is no upper age limit. Donors should eat a good meal and drink plenty of water within 4 hours prior to their donation. Donors can give blood every eight weeks. Photo ID and Social Security Number are required at donor registration.

FHCN WELCOMES NEW PROVIDER TO VISALIA WALK-IN HEALTH CENTER

Family HealthCare Network (FHCN) is pleased to announce Aaron Clothier, PA-C as the newest addition to its provider team in Visalia. As a physician assistant, Clothier offers family medicine services for patients of FHCN's extended-hour Visalia Bridge Walk-in Health Center in downtown Visalia.

Clothier received his degree in Physician Assistant Studies from the Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science in Los Angeles. Clothier's educational background also includes Bachelor of Science degrees in Biology and Psychology from the University of California, Irvine. He has several years of experience working as a physician assistant in skilled nursing facilities, hospitals and urgent care settings.

Clothier is accepting new patients at FHCN's Visalia Bridge Walk-in Health Center, located at 501 N. Bridge Street. The health center is now open seven days a week, Monday through Friday, 9am to 10pm, and Saturday through Sunday, 8am to 8pm. No appointment is necessary. For more information about Family HealthCare Network, please call 1-877-960-3426 (FHCN) or visit www.fhcn.org.

WHCL COMMUNITY EDUCATION TO OFFER ESL WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION CLASS IN AVENAL

West Hills College Lemoore's Community Education Program will be offering a class in Avenal for the first time starting on April 8.

The course will focus on workplace communication for English as a Second Language students and will be taught by WHCL instructor Jan Roberts. The goal of the course is to help ESL students gain more confidence with verbal communication in the workplace and develop a clearer understanding of English.

"We are excited to be extending our community education opportunities to the community of Avenal," said James Preston, Dean of Educational Services. "This class provides community members with a taste of what it would be like to take a class at the college, while providing them with language skills they can use immediately in the workplace and in their community."

The course begins on April 8 and runs to May 13, with classes offered on Wednesday nights from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Avenal High School.

The cost is $50 and the fee will be collected on the first day of class.

For more information or to register, contact Debbie Rose at 925-3203 or by email at debbierose@whccd.edu. More information about the program and the course is also available at http://bit.ly/1xcrdUf.

NEW DIRECTOR OF PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT NAMED FOR VISALIA CHAMBER

Scott Smith, the sales and marketing representative with SERVPRO Visalia, is the new Director of Partnership Development of the Visalia Chamber of Commerce. Smith has been with SERVPRO since February 2011.

A native Visalian, Smith has built a strong community reputation serving as President of West Visalia Kiwanis, winning Tulare and Kings County Hispanic Chamber President's Award and as the Visalia Chamber of Commerce Ambassador of the Year. He believes connecting and serving businesses makes our community grow and is excited to partner with Visalia Chamber Members.

"Scott is a great addition to our team," said Gail Zurek, President/CEO of the Visalia Chamber. "His energy and enthusiasm for supporting Visalia business is contagious."

When not working, Smith enjoys spending time outdoors, golfing but most enjoys spending time with Ally and their four month old son Sebastian.

Smith joins the team on April 1st.

KAWEAH DELTA ANNOUNCES NEW RESIDENT PHYSICIANS

Kaweah Delta Health Care District has selected its first class of residents for its surgery and transitional year programs, along with residents for three other established residency programs.

From September 2014 through this February, Kaweah Delta received more than 1,900 applications and interviewed more than 400 candidates for the residency programs. The following residents will join 28 returning residents, bringing the district's total of resident physicians to 59. They will begin two weeks of orientation on June 22 before starting their rotations at the district.

NASS MODIFIES AGRICULTURAL PRICES PROGRAM

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is modifying the Agricultural Prices program.

The annual March survey prices paid data will no longer be published. These data include prices paid and value of hatchery production for poultry, and prices paid for fuels, feed, seeds, fertilizer, machinery, and chemicals. These prices were published each year in the April Agricultural Prices report. Monthly Prices Paid Indexes for farm input categories will continue to be published each month.

For more information about the NASS Price Program, visit: http://www.nass.usda.gov/Surveys/Guide_to_NASS_Surveys/ Prices/index.asp

Agricultural farm input price data for 2014 and prior years are available at www.nass.usda.gov.

BANK OF THE SIERRA ANNOUNCES KRISTEN AVERY AS VICE PRESIDENT, AGRICULTURAL LOAN OFFICER

Bank of the Sierra recently named Kristen Avery as Vice President, Agricultural Loan Officer. In her new position, Avery will meet with prospective clients to cultivate banking relationships, including developing and managing agricultural loan accounts along with other financial products and services.

Avery was most recently employed at Rabobank, NA, Fresno as a Financial Credit Analyst. Prior to Rabobank, Avery was a Credit Analyst for Bank of the West in Fresno. Avery attended Texas A&M University and obtained a Bachelor of Science in Agribusiness.

"The bank is excited to have Kristen join the Bank of the Sierra family, especially the Ag department. She will make an excellent addition and we look forward to her contributions," stated Harroll Wiley, Ag Credit President.

Bank of the Sierra (www.bankofthesierra.com) is in its 38th year of operations, and at $1.6 billion in assets is the largest independent bank headquartered in the South San Joaquin Valley. The Company has over 400 employees and conducts business through 28 branch offices, an online branch, a real estate industries center, and an agricultural credit center.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO TULARE COUNTY ANIMAL CONTROL ORDINANCES

Residents of the unincorporated areas of Tulare County can expect to hear about proposed changes to Tulare County Animal Control ordinances and lend their opinion and expertise to staff during public meetings that are being held by Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency. Animal Control hopes to provide increased clarity while continuing to serve the residents of Tulare County.

Key proposed changes addressed at the meetings include:

- Creation of a procedure using a Corrective Action Plan (CAP)
- Distinctions and requirements for types of kennels
- Microchips for outgoing dogs
- Jurisdiction of Animal Control and Officers

Public meetings will be held in Earlimart, Dinuba, and Porterville:

- Earlimart: Thursday, April 16, 5-7pm at Earlimart
- Elementary School, 192 S. Church Rd.
- Dinuba: Thursday, April 23, 5-7pm at the Dinuba Recreation
- Center, 1390 E. Elizabeth Way
- Porterville: Thursday, May 14, 5-7pm at Porterville City
- Council Chambers, 291 N. Main St.

For more information on the proposed ordinances and Tulare County Animal Control, please visit: www.tchhsa.org/TCACOrdinances.

Please send your questions to AnimalControlSupport@tularehhsa.org, or call 559-636-4080.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION SEMINAR TO BE HELD APRIL 9

Denham Resources and Hatmaker Law Group will hold a Prevention of Sexual Harassment & Abusive Conduct seminar on April 9, 2015, at the Visalia Holiday Inn.

The cost is $30 per attendee.

For more information, call Kathy Bray at (559) 222-5284.

City's Second Oldest Business Keeping Up With Changing Times

Dave Adalian

For the last 125 years, Visalia Granite and Marble Works has marked the passing of loved ones, family and friends from a small suite of offices and workshops just outside the gates to the Visalia Public Cemetery on Goshen Avenue.

Inside a quiet, well-appointed showroom, examples of their wares line wooden display shelves, the names and faces of the departed, the dates of their birth and death, greeting those who come to make a final homage to those they have lost. This is where owner, Ron Westbrook and his staff efficiently run the city's oldest locally-owned business, guiding the grieving through difficult times.

"It's actually the second oldest (business)," Westbrook, 56, said of the firm he purchased in 1997 from previous owner, Gerald Ruddell, who purchased the business himself in 1947. "But, it's the oldest locally-owned business, as far as we know. Being one of the oldest surviving businesses, it's cool. We just carry on that tradition."

Founded in 1890

Visalia Granite was founded in 1890, and until Westbrook and his wife Karen purchased it, it was housed in offices adjacent to the cemetery gates; a small tin building behind it serving as the shop where stone workers cut the memorials and grave markers that dot the spreading green lawns nearby.

"When I bought the original Visalia Granite, it was outdated," Westbrook said. "They only had one computer in here."

All that has changed quickly and radically. The tin workshop is gone, torn down in 2011 to make way for a yard where unfinished stones and statues in poses of mourning wait in the Valley sun to be made into gravestones and memorials. None of that is much different than the last century and a quarter, but what happens inside now is nothing like the bygone days of hammer and chisel.

In 2008, Visalia Granite expanded west into a 5,000-square-foot showroom and manufacturing facility. Behind the scenes, computers now lay out designs created to suit the wishes of the bereaved, and work once done by hand is now handled by autonomous, computer-driven machinery, completing jobs in minutes that in years gone by would have taken days.

"It's like a CAD program," Westbrook said of the software that drives the automated sandblaster that dominates the new work space. "It's set up for memorials."

A simple process

The process is not complicated. After designs are approved, templates of thick, rubbery, adhesive-coated plastic are printed in a layout area, then applied to the stone that will become the final product. Bits of the template are removed, and a steady stream of rushing sand blasts away the exposed material, cutting deep groves to make the names of those lost and to mark the dates of their coming and going. A coat of paint gives the lettering contrast, making it stand out, and the finished stone is sent to be encased in a bed of concrete before its final, permanent installation.

Despite the modern efficiency of the manufacturing process, Westbrook still finds himself wondering what it would have been like had he owned the business when it opened more than a century ago.

"I wish I was here in the 1890s," he said. "I would have loved to have carved stone here. Even my wife says I was born 50 or 100 years too late."

Perhaps it's a longing for simpler times and places that gives Westbrook his love of the outdoors. On the wall of his office, a huge king salmon he caught during a trip to Alaska hangs over a mural by Three Rivers artist, Jana Botkin.

"We love camping, my wife, my friends and I," Westbrook said. "I like to do some fishing. I love golf."

Home away from home

Among Visalia Granite's staff of eight full- and part-time employees is a feeling of being with family, said 15-year employee Jennifer McGee, salesperson, designer and bookkeeper.

Her reason for staying with the company, "First and foremost, it would be Ron and Karen. They're the greatest," she said. "This is my home away from home."

The familial connection at Visalia Granite is even more solid for 17-year employee Cindy Medrano, who became reacquainted with the man who would become her husband, David, once a fellow student at Hanford High, when he turned up there unexpectedly.

"He walked in one day and said, 'What are you doing here?'" she said.

Business is business

Even with the easygoing atmosphere in the office, Visalia Granite is still a business, and Westbrook has had to change with the changing times.

"When money gets tight, it slows down," he said. "We're doing stones for the '90s. We have people coming in from the '40s, World War II. It's not an as-needed thing."

The memorial business has also seen a marked slowdown since the economic turmoil of the first decade of the 2000's, as more people opted for cremation rather than burial. Some 70 percent of all deceased in the state are now cremated, Westbrook said.

"It's an ever-changing business with the cremation rates going up. People think your business should be steady," he said. "Eight to 10 years ago when the economy crashed, so did the death industry."

Westbrook worries the trend toward cremation will leave loved ones without a solid means of remembering their lost.

"Future grandchildren won't have a place to memorialize their grandfather," he said. "Cremation is fine, but don't forget to memorialize."

With that in mind, Visalia Granite has begun offering permanent markers to keep and preserve the memory of loved ones without grave sites. It now offers a range of carved rocks, bronze plaques and small headstones. Westbrook has also expanded his business into wholesale marketing to cemeteries around the state, and the business does between $1 and $2 million dollars in sales annually.

"Our future is memorialization, headstones and tombstones for cemeteries throughout California," he said.

Expanding the enterprise

Visalia Granite also maintains mobile units that travel routes around the state to update and repair memorials already in place. And, Westbrook has earned certified memorialist status through a program sponsored by the Monument Builders of North America.

"We're the only ones here in the Valley who have it," he said. "There's only a couple in the state. There are only a few hundred in the nation."

The status, which requires certification every two years, keeps Visalia Granite on the cutting edge of the industry.

Westbrook has not always been in the memorial business, and his past as a landscape architect and licensed engineering contractor came into play when he and his company were tasked with designing and building the Veterans Memorial inside the Visalia Public Cemetery.

"I had the pleasure and honor of doing the Visalia Veterans Memorial," he said. "We built it from the ground up."

Visalia Granite is not the first business Westbrook has owned, but it is the one that suits him best.

"Actually, I'm an entrepreneur of sorts. I've owned several businesses," he said. "This is where I get to hang my hat every day. I kind of like it the best."

Visalia Granite and Marble Works is located at 1304 W. Goshen Ave.

Ron Westbrook, owner of Visalia Granite and Marble Works, checks a headstone design for errors before final processing in his workshop. Photo by: Dave Adalian

Mike Galindo, an employee at Visalia Granite and Marble Works, prepares to set finished headstones in concrete bases. Photo by: Dave Adalian

Fresno Nephrology Medical Group, Inc.

STEVE SU, M.D.
JOSEPH C. DUFLOT, M.D.
HARPREET DHINDSA, M.D.
MEI HWANG, M.D.
SUKHVIR S. ATWAL, M.D.
JASJIT SINGH, M.D.

STEVEN B. LEVY, M.D.
ANURADHA SURI, M.D.
YANGMING CAO, M.D.
HEMANT DHINGRA, M.D.
GREGORY MARTINEZ, M.D.

ANNOUNCEMENT

We are pleased to announce the opening of our Visalia offices.

Visalia Nephrology Medical Group
and
Announce the Association
of
DAVID HEANEY, M.D. and MAGDY G. MAKSY, M.D.

515 W. Acequia Suite A, Visalia, CA 93291

500 South Sante Fe Avenue, Visalia, CA 93292

Specializing in Kidney Disease, Hypertension, Transplant Evaluation, Diabetic Kidney Disease

Please call our office at 559-228-6600 if you wish to schedule your next appointment at our Visalia offices.

Viewpoint

Who Are the Nuclear Scofflaws?

Lawrence S. Wittner

Given all the frothing by hawkish U.S. Senators about Iran's possible development of nuclear weapons, one might think that Iran was violating the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

But it's not. The NPT, signed by 190 nations and in effect since 1970, is a treaty in which the non-nuclear nations agreed to forgo developing nuclear weapons and the nuclear nations agreed to divest themselves of their nuclear weapons. It also granted nations the right to develop peaceful nuclear power. The current negotiations in which Iran is engaged with other nations are merely designed to guarantee that Iran, which signed the NPT, does not cross the line from developing nuclear power to developing nuclear weapons.

Nine nations, however, have flouted the NPT by either developing nuclear weapons since the treaty went into effect or failing to honor the commitment to disarm. These nine scofflaws and their nuclear arsenals are Russia (7,500 nuclear warheads), the United States (7,100 nuclear warheads), France (300 nuclear warheads), China (250 nuclear warheads), Britain (215 nuclear warheads), Pakistan (100-120 nuclear warheads), India (90-110 nuclear warheads), Israel (80 nuclear warheads), and North Korea (<10 nuclear warheads).

Nor are the nuclear powers likely to be in compliance with the NPT any time soon. The Indian and Pakistani governments are engaged in a rapid nuclear weapons buildup, while the British government is contemplating the development of a new, more advanced nuclear weapons system. Although, in recent decades, the U.S. and Russian governments did reduce their nuclear arsenals substantially, that process has come to a halt in recent years, as relations have soured between the two nations. Indeed, both countries are currently engaged in a new, extremely dangerous nuclear arms race. The U.S. government has committed itself to spending $1 trillion to "modernize" its nuclear facilities and build new nuclear weapons. For its part, the Russian government is investing heavily in the upgrading of its nuclear warheads and the development of new delivery systems, such as nuclear missiles and nuclear submarines.

What can be done about this flouting of the NPT, some 45 years after it went into operation?

That will almost certainly be a major issue at an NPT Review Conference that will convene at the UN headquarters, in New York City, from April 27 to May 22. These review conferences, held every five years, attract high-level national officials from around the world to discuss the treaty's implementation. For a very brief time, the review conferences even draw the attention of television and other news commentators before the mass communications media return to their preoccupation with scandals, arrests, and the lives of movie stars.

This spring's NPT review conference might be particularly lively, given the heightening frustration of the non-nuclear powers at the failure of the nuclear powers to fulfill their NPT commitments. At recent disarmament conferences in Norway, Mexico and Austria, the representatives of a large number of non-nuclear nations, ignoring the opposition of the nuclear powers, focused on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear war. One rising demand among restless non-nuclear nations and among nuclear disarmament groups is to develop a nuclear weapons ban treaty, whether or not the nuclear powers are willing to participate in negotiations.

To heighten the pressure for the abolition of nuclear weapons, nuclear disarmament groups are staging a Peace and Planet mobilization, in Manhattan, on the eve of the NPT review conference. Calling for a "Nuclear-Free, Peaceful, Just, and Sustainable World," the mobilization involves an international conference (comprised of plenaries and workshops) on April 24 and 25, plus a culminating interfaith convocation, rally, march, and festival on April 26. Among the hundreds of endorsing organizations are many devoted to peace (Fellowship of Reconciliation, Pax Christi, Peace Action, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Veterans for Peace, and Women's International League for Peace & Freedom), environmentalism (Earth Action, Friends of the Earth, and 350NYC), religion (Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, Unitarian Universalist UN Office, United Church of Christ, and United Methodist General Board of Church & Society), workers' rights (New Jersey Industrial Union Council, United Electrical Workers, and Working Families Party), and human welfare (American Friends Service Committee and National Association of Social Workers).

Of course, how much effect the proponents of a nuclear weapons-free world will have on the cynical officials of the nuclear powers remains to be seen. After as many as 45 years of stalling on their own nuclear disarmament, it is hard to imagine that they are finally ready to begin negotiating a treaty effectively banning nuclear weapons — or at least their nuclear weapons.

Meanwhile, let us encourage Iran not to follow the bad example set by the nuclear powers. And let us ask the nuclear-armed nations, now telling Iran that it should forgo the possession of nuclear weapons, when they are going to start practicing what they preach.

Lawrence Wittner (http://lawrenceswittner.com), syndicated by PeaceVoice, is Professor of History emeritus at SUNY/Albany. He is the author of Confronting the Bomb: A Short History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement (Stanford University Press).

Great Speech in Selma, Mr. President!

Winslow Myers

Very stirring and eloquent words at the Edmund Pettus Bridge, Mr. President, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery march.

"What they did here will reverberate through the ages. Not because the change they won was preordained; not because their victory was complete; but because they proved that nonviolent change is possible, that love and hope can conquer hate."

Not only that nonviolent change is possible, Mr. President, but that nonviolence is by far the most effective route to change both at home and abroad. So stop sending those drones to kill innocent children in faraway desert lands, murders that create more terrorists than they eliminate!

"What greater expression of faith in the American experiment than this, what greater form of patriotism is there than the belief that America is not yet finished, that we are strong enough to be self-critical, that each successive generation can look upon our imperfections and decide that it is in our power to remake this nation to more closely align with our highest ideals?"

Yes! So rather than forcing him into exile for fear of not getting a fair trial, let's honor the heroism of Edward Snowden for exposing the lies of high officials and their trashing of our inalienable right to freedom and autonomy. You promised the most transparent government in the history of our country, but there is more secrecy and persecution of whistleblowers than ever.

It's the idea held by generations of citizens who believed that America is a constant work in progress; who believed that loving this country requires more than singing its praises or avoiding uncomfortable truths. It requires the occasional disruption, the willingness to speak out for what is right, to shake up the status quo. That's America."

Indeed it is. And that is why it is a tragedy that no one has been held accountable under the law for the web of deceit that led us into the tragic, budget-busting military campaigns that have only planted the seeds for further violence in the Mideast. These wars went forward in the face of the largest peaceful citizen protest marches in the history of the world.

"What a glorious thing, Dr. King might say. And what a solemn debt we owe. Which leads us to ask, just how might we repay that debt?"

One way we can repay that debt and we ourselves can shine in the light of Dr. King's glory is not to forget Dr. King's truth-telling connection of ill-considered, futile wars abroad with eradicable poverty and racism at home.

"'We are capable of bearing a great burden,' James Baldwin once wrote, 'once we discover that the burden is reality and arrive where reality is.'

There's nothing America can't handle if we actually look squarely at the problem . . . If we want to honor the courage of those who marched that day, then all of us are called to possess their moral imagination. All of us will need to feel as they did the fierce urgency of now. All of us need to recognize as they did that change depends on our actions, on our attitudes, the things we teach our children. And if we make such an effort, no matter how hard it may sometimes seem, laws can be passed, and consciences can be stirred, and consensus can be built."

Right on. These rousing words remind us of your past speeches advocating for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Instead, our government plans to spend untold dollars desperately needed for meeting real human needs on the renewal of our nuclear arsenal, arrogantly disregarding our solemn obligation as a signatory of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty to ramp down and finally eliminate these expensive, useless world-destroying weapons.

"Of course, our democracy is not the task of Congress alone, or the courts alone, or even the President alone. If every new voter-suppression law was struck down today, we would still have, here in America, one of the lowest voting rates among free peoples. . .

What's our excuse today for not voting? How do we so casually discard the right for which so many fought? How do we so fully give away our power, our voice, in shaping America's future?"

Could it have anything to do with cynicism and disillusion with a political game that is rigged against authentic democracy from the get-go, the corruption at the heart of our politics and economics encouraged by our own highest court, corruption that equates money with speech, rotting our electoral system from within, corruption that allows ethically challenged bankers not only to walk free but also to be bailed out by the hard-earned tax dollars of ordinary citizens?

"That's what it means to love America. That's what it means to believe in America. That's what it means when we say America is exceptional."

Sadly, America is also exceptional in its grinding contradictions, as your speech itself demonstrates despite its obvious good intentions and unifying rhetoric. America is indeed exceptional in the incarcerated percentage of its population, in infant mortality, in the number of people who may be uncertain from where their next meal is coming. The exceptional promise of our country will truly be realized when principles applied in one compartment of our national life become relevant to all compartments.

Winslow Myers, syndicated by for Peacevoice, is author of "Living Beyond War: A Citizen's Guide."

Columns & Letters

"*sigh* This kind of nonsense is why I'll probably never join a political party. Already the underdogs in this area, and now they're yapping at each other rather than taking on the real problems. Will Rogers was right."

— ***Jim Reeves**, on **Questions of Money, Loyalty Plague County Democrats***

"I've been a lifelong registered Democrat and don't intend to change; I'm continuing to work fervently on local issues on my own, along with a few colleagues. I did withdraw my name last year from the FB Dem group and stopped participating in chapter activities because I found the previous leader's treatment of members to be abusive. At the same time the TCDCC is clearly throwing its weight around and acting like Vlad Lenin's CP Central Committee, lol. So while this sleaze is embarrassing and possibly damaging to the party's already poor following in the Valley, I'm glad the Voice brought it out into the open. That's how I used to spot and flush roaches out of my cupboards, lol."

— ***Renee Lapin**, on **Questions of Money, Loyalty Plague County Democrats***

"Ferrets are about as "imported" as dogs and cats are. California Fish and Wildlife is one of the most bureaucratic and self serving organizations in that state, their allegiance lying only with organizations that line their collective pockets the most. Ferret owners don't stand a chance against that kind of corruption.

Nice write up though.

PS…Its Ferrets Anonymous, not Unanimous."

— ***Bonniet**, on **Campaign for Ferret Legalization Growing***

"This is clearly not a question of two warring factions as some may think. This is the direct result of Chairman Macareno's ongoing quest for self aggrandizement and his petty efforts to be the only spokesman for Tulare County Democrats. Because he has turned the County Central Committee into a closed entity where he and his cohorts can tell each other how important they are, they have forfeited the right to complain when other active, loyal, and engaged Democrats want to build the Party.

As a former 12 year Chair of the TCDCC I know how these Committees are supposed to function; they are meant to be inclusive and welcoming, and certainly never to shut out and restrict citizens who simply want to participate and be heard. That is the polar opposite of what Democrats are all about.

It is indeed ironic that Mr. Macareno chooses to adopt the policies of the Republicans who fall all over themselves trying to deny participation in the political process and thereby choking the life out of the political process. The fact that the State Democratic Party, after it's thorough review of all the actions of the TCDCC, has issued a scathing public rebuke for the Central Committee's petty and completely misguided complaining, pretty clearly makes the point of who is really to blame here.

Perhaps this timely public disclosure of these anti-democratic antics will put and end to the autocratic power trip that is so unseemly. Mr. Macareno has been given the chance to be a leader, and an effective spokesperson for Democrats in this county, but instead he has wasted and squandered that opportunity by failing to be a leader who allows and encourages others to succeed. He has abandoned success and inclusion, and that's a real shame.

Finally, if, as reported in this story, Mr. Macareno has convinced State Treasurer John Chiang to cancel his appearance at the Roosevelt Gala and deny county Democrats from hearing from a State Constitutional officer, they both should be mightily ashamed of themselves."

— ***Joe Altschule**, on **Questions of Money, Loyalty Plague County Democrats***

"First of all, let me reiterate that fact that Tulare County makes up their rules as it goes and does what they want, when they want, regardless of the outcome. TCAC is right up there, in line with TCSO and TCDA. Their decision makers are idiots. Obviously Tulare County knows they did wrong and hiring these very expensive outside attorneys is not going to help them at all, especially since they have their own little group of idiots at the TC county counsel. Tulare County seems to spend more money on fighting a battle which they are going to lose anyway.

This issue at TCAC is a classic example of what these department heads think they can get away with. Tulare County allows their department heads to punish employees on a personal basis and they allow them to conduct themselves in a very unbecoming and criminal manner. The county just turns their head to this type of behavior while thinking it will all just go away. Well, guess what Tulare County…..it's not going anywhere!! Suck it up buttercups!! The proof that fault is within management is in the pudding. Guess who has the pudding?? Tulare County is going to lose another battle. By far, more costlier and incomprehensible. The dirty laundry is out there. You can't change the truth!!

It sounds like the supervisor and her group of "idiots" has taken a very personal approach when she fired Jimenez and conducted bad behavior against Jimenez and Grenseman. Sounds like someone might have been a little jealous and wanted to "get rid of" the threat.

TCAC and Tulare County needs stopped. Do the right thing. People of Tulare County need to speak up and be heard. Let's not approve of this behavior in our county entities. As this article stated, "the county cannot pick and choose who to fire over sexual misconduct," especially since the person doing the firing (the blow job queen) is conducting apprehensible behavior worthy of termination."

— ***Charlie Fletcher**, on **New Developments in Suit Against TCAC***

Apéritif

Mercedes Oldenbourg

Veteran's Corner

Burial Medallions

Joe Wright

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides a medallion, by request, to be affixed to an existing, privately purchased headstone or marker to signify the deceased's status as a veteran. This device is furnished in lieu of a traditional Government headstone or grave marker for those veterans whose death occurred on or after Nov. 1, 1990, and whose grave in a private cemetery is marked with a privately purchased headstone or marker.

The bronze medallions are durable and can be easily affixed to privately purchased headstones by anyone, avoiding headstone or marker setting fees. The medallion also offers a way to identify the grave as that of a veteran when a cemetery only allows one headstone per grave, preventing the use of a standard VA marker as a footstone. Each medallion is inscribed with the word "VETERAN" across the top and the branch of service at the bottom.

Once a claim for a medallion is received and approved, the VA will mail the medallion along with a kit that will allow the family or the staff of a private cemetery to affix the device to a headstone, grave marker, mausoleum or columbarium niche cover. This benefit is only applicable if the grave is marked with a privately purchased headstone or marker. In these instances, eligible veterans are entitled to either a traditional Government-furnished headstone or marker, or the new medallion, but not both. The veteran's Next of Kin (NOK), a person authorized in writing by the NOK or a representative authorized in writing by the deceased veteran may order the medallion. If there are two veterans interred, two medallions can be affixed to the privately purchased headstone. Our office can assist you in ordering a medallion.

The Kings County Veterans Service Office issues Veteran I.D. cards to honorably discharged veterans. Contact Joe Wright if you would like to receive periodic veteran's information by email. There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To find out if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office webpage at www.countyofkings.com.

Joe Wright, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Hanford, CA 93230; call 852-2669; or e-mail joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us.

Poll results:

"Do you feel pet ferrets should be legalized in California?"

Yes: 98.61%

No: 1.39%

Editor's note:

Several glaring errors marred the 19 March issue. The editor, here, publicly declares his imbecility. It probably won't happen again.

Public Speaks Out on Condition of Mooney Grove

Catherine Doe

At the March 24 Tulare County Supervisors' meeting a group of concerned citizens spoke out during public comment about the condition of Mooney Grove Park. The group, affiliated with The Real Mooney Grove Project, gathered before hand to protest in front of the chambers.

Amy Dickenson from Visalia said she felt that the park, if maintained, could be just one more asset to make Visalia a destination city. She pointed out that the county employees who work at the park can't keep up with the maintenance.

Dickenson said that there are only three maintenance workers and that they have expressed the need for at least six. One is just assigned to clean goose droppings, another to mow the lawn and a third to do general maintenance. The largest eyesore, though there are many, she said, is the pond. If her child accidently fell in, she would need a panel of tetanus shots, she said.

She further suggested that the county send a water specialist to advise the maintenance crew how to keep it clean.

Chuck Berry, another speaker, said that he was sure that they could organize a group of volunteers to clean up the park.

Supervisor Phil Cox had warned at a previous meeting that Mooney Grove needed a lot of work on its infrastructure that would take time and money and that they were not going to open the gates to a group of volunteers equipped with hammers and screw drivers.

Berry said that the pond was a disaster area full of junk and stagnant water.

The drought is partly to blame for the condition of the pond. But there are several parks in the San Joaquin Valley with beautiful lakes and ponds from which the supervisors should seek advice, he said.

Mary Bryant, founder of The Real Mooney Grove Project, said that after one year of talking with the supervisors and coming before the board only two sparsely attended meetings on Mooney Grove have taken place. Those two meetings revolved around the 20-year-plan, that is a beautiful document, but that won't be implemented until most of the Mooney Grove advocates are dead.

Bryant expressed that the group involved in the project is tired of waiting for a response to their offer of doing maintenance, restoring and repairs. One of the men ready to help with repairs was the owner of the construction firm that build Mooney Grove's boat house.

"What it appears to us is the county does not want the park. If the park is such a burden, then allow the people who do care for it to take over," said Bryant.

She also wanted to address the issue of the General Manager Neil Pilagard's honesty.

"He has not been truthful to us or to you. The fish pond/fountain he said could not be repaired, and would cost $80,000-$150,000 to restore. Yet a video of the pond was sent to a specialist in Los Angeles who said 'Mr Pilagard is full of… He said, 'I have restored these fish ponds all over California that are a lot older and in much worse shape than this one.' A piece of cake, and for a fraction of the cost," Bryant said.

"The rowboats, Pilagard said, 'no demand, and were stolen and vandalized.' Not true. In 1978, 42 rowboats were sold for $500. He said that the concrete tables/benches were made defective. Again not true. They were damaged when work furlough and inmates crashed into them while riding a tractor to empty the trash cans. If the General Manager cannot be truthful to his Superiors, and the park is still a mess, there is no place in the future for a person in management with no integrity," she said.

The Mooney Grove Park pond.

John McGill, who is a 51 year resident of Tulare County, said that Mooney Grove is for the people. Just like the pristine landscaping outside of the chambers is a reflection of the supervisors, Mooney Grove is a reflection of the tax payer. McGill went with his dad to the Oklahoma museum to visit the End of the Trail statue. Next to the statue is a plaque commemorating Mooney Grove Park where it used to stand.

McGill said that nationally the park is an ambassador for the city. McGill couldn't understand how a county that is number one in agriculture, that feeds the world, can't get it together to take care of a park.

Each commentary revolved around one question. Why has Mooney Grove been allowed to get into the state it is in now?

No discussion about Mooney Grove takes place without locals looking back at their childhood. McGill said that he had so many good memories as a kid and that the condition of the park really bothers him. When his dad was in town visiting recently they went to Mooney Grove. The only thing McGill's dad could say was that he was really glad they moved the End of the Trail statue to Oklahoma.

Berry said that, as a COS student, his art class would go out and do watercolors of the bridges, lake and statues. Now there are just broken pedestals, benches and walkways.

Everyone realizes that the zoo and carousel aren't coming back. They just want a beautiful place to take their children and grandchildren, and say this is where we played in the old days before Facebook and Netflix. Mooney Grove doesn't need a pie in the sky 20-year-plan with a Wild West Main Street and a remodeled museum. The park just needs to be a beautiful public space, the speakers said.

Valley Voice
Valley Scene

Symphony Season Finale Features Mahler, 'Red Violin'

Donna Orozco

The Tulare County Symphony finishes its 2014-15 season by performing three powerhouse pieces at 7:30pm on Saturday, April 18 at the Visalia Fox Theatre.

Two years ago guest violinist Lindsay Deutsch wowed audiences with her performance of "Rhapsody in Blue." For this concert, she performs music from the 1998 film "The Red Violin," which tells the story of a mysterious instrument and its many owners over three centuries.

Composer John Corigliano received an Oscar for the Best Original Score for the film. He used the Baroque device of a chaconne, a repeated pattern of chords, performed alongside "Anna's Theme," a lyrical yet intense melody representing the violin builder's doomed wife.

The composer scored the film just for the solo violin and string orchestra (to emphasize the "stringness" of the movie) but later fleshed out the 17-minute concert work for violin and full orchestra.

Born in Houston, Texas, Deutsch became concertmaster of the Disney Young Musicians Symphony Orchestra at age 12. She has performed around the world and played the solo violin sound track for the 2006 movie "The Good Shepherd" starring Robert De Niro. Her performances have also been heard on National Public Radio.

Mahler Symphony No. 5

The symphony always ends its season with a giant work, and Symphony No. 5 by Gustav Mahler certainly fits that description. It was composed in 1901 and 1902, and features a trumpet that opens the work and the frequently performed fourth movement, Adagietto.

The Adagietto is probably Mahler's most famous composition and is the most frequently performed of his works. Leonard Bernstein conducted it during the funeral mass for Robert Kennedy at St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York, on June 8, 1968. It was used in the 1971 film "Death in Venice." And Ice dancers Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir from Canada won gold medals using the theme at the 2110 Winter Olympics and the 2010 World Championships.

Sibelius "Finlandia"

"Finlandia" is a symphonic poem by Finnish composer Jean Sibelius which features the melodic and well-known Finlandia Hymn. Often incorrectly cited as a traditional folk melody, the hymn actually was written by the composer.

SYMPHONY on **19 »**

Lindsay Deutsch

Clarinetist Extraordinaire Headlines Jazzaffair

Staff Reports

"Jazz for the Generations…A Family Affair" themes the 42nd annual Jazzaffair in Three Rivers, April 10 – 12, featuring 14 bands from seven states sponsored by Sierra Traditional Jazz Club. Jazzaffair is the longest-running traditional jazz festival west of the Mississippi.

New High Sierra

The spotlight is shared by Three Rivers' own nationally acclaimed High Sierra Jazz Band and Bob Draga, Key Largo, FL. Draga is arguably one of the most popular and talented jazz musicians in the country. His quick wit and story-telling ability provides entertainment along with his clarinet renditions.

Music lovers will hear traditional Dixieland jazz (New Orleans music), ragtime, blues, zydeco, Cajun, swing-Motown and even an occasional cowboy song, plus Gospel music on Sunday morning at several venues, including the Presbyterian Church.

In keeping with the theme, on the entertainment side, there are two youthful groups: The Reedley River Rats, a very professional sounding traditional jazz band from Reedley High School and

JAZZAFFAIR continued on **19 »**

"Upside Down, Inside Out: A Way of Seeing"

Jeri Burzin

"Upside Down, Inside Out: A Way of Seeing" is the title of the upcoming Main Gallery Artists exhibit at the Exeter Courthouse Gallery, April 12 – June 28. The concept emerged when artist Kay Woods talked about wanting to see her work as a child might in the playground, hanging upside down on monkey bars, without judgment or fear of criticism.

Marjorie Brandon

The show is dedicated to Marjorie Brandon, who sees things in unique ways and has become a Visalia icon who has created beautiful art throughout her many years working with collage to create something new and wonderful in nature. She is a wonderful role model and treasure in our community.

Each artist has their own unique way of seeing as you will see in this exhibit. Toni Best has been creating baskets and gourds for over 55 years and works to make the pine needles move, undulate, and swirl instead of being static.

UPSIDE DOWN continued on **19 »**

Deanna Saldana Presents "Portraits in Pencil"

Staff Reports

The South Valley Artists' Studio Tour features artists in Lindsay, Exeter, Woodlake, Springville, Porterville and Three Rivers, Friday-Sunday, March 20-22.

"In Their Hands"

Those on the tour will find a different "look" in Lindsay with two studios open; that of Ginny Wilson's Blue Ridge Photography, and the second, the studio of Merary Lopez at Healthy Start, an organization that provides services to the families of Lindsay students.

Lopez, born and raised in Mexico, graduated from Universidad de Montemorelos with a Bachelor's Degree in Visual Arts in 1992. An artist in her own right, she also teaches art classes and art history for children and young adults at Healthy Start in Lindsay. Her own paintings as well as teaching demonstrations and the work of her students will be on display at the Healthy Start studio, 400 E. Hermosa St.

Wilson has an outdoor gallery and studio "with a view" as one looks east toward the Sierra from her hilltop home. Her photographs include scenes in nature, and images from the U.S. and Europe. All illustrate her love of shape, contrast, and color. Her studio is located at 1864 E. Lindmore.

"Nurture"

Other nearby studios include Eric Gonzales' at 201 Portola Ave., Exeter, as well as Linda Hengst and John Sundstrom in Woodlake, Lindsay Dion, Joy Harvey and Ron Zanini in Springville and Joy Collier (Featured Artist!) on Success Valley Dr., Porterville. Collier also has a one-person exhibit at the Porterville Art Association, 152 N. Main St.

In addition to the two studios in Lindsay, an on-going exhibit by longtime Porterville College Art Teacher, Tom Howell, is still on the walls at the Museum/Gallery, 165 N. Gale Hill in Lindsay. The Museum/Gallery will be open during Sunday hours of the tour.

The South Valley Artists' Studio Tour takes place from 5-8pm Friday, 10am-5pm Saturday and 10am-4pm Sunday.

Tour booklets including tickets and maps are available at each location for $15.

Chris Shepard and Zaelin Brown play silent movie stars Don Lockwood and Lina Lamont.

Lindsay Community Theater Opens Singin' in the Rain April 10

Staff Reports

Smash Broadway Musical Singin' in the Rain opens at the Lindsay Community Theater on Friday, April 10 at 7:30pm.

Singin' in the Rain is a wonderful, bright musical with great musical numbers like "Good Morning," "You are My Lucky Star," "You Were Meant for Me," "Make 'Em Laugh," "All I Do Is Dream of You," and of course, "Singin' in the Rain." This show is directed by Jim Kliegl, music by Richard Robinson, choreography by Linda Jarrett, and vocal coaching by Kami Whitten.

Singin' in the Rain is the story of silent film star Don Lockwood (Chris Shepard) and his leading lady Lina Lamont (Zaelin Brown). Studio executive R. F. Simpson (Tom Moran) and director Roscoe Dexter (Rom Fleming) publicize that Don and Lina are in love, and Lina believes it is true, even though Don tries to tell her there is nothing between them, "only air."

After the premiere of their latest movie, Don decides to walk to the opening night party, but is accosted by fans. He pretends he is not Don Lockwood by sitting next to a girl on a bench claiming she is his girlfriend. The girl, Kathy Seldon (Kami Whitter) is upset with this sudden encounter and calls for a policeman (Isaac Mehciz), who tells her how lucky she is to be with a big movie star.

Don's ploy only lasts a few minutes before fans once again mob him and he flees. Later at the party, the

LINDSAY continued on **19 »**

Built to Spill at the Cellar Door April 10

Aaron Gomes

Indie rock legends Built to Spill played Cellar Door back in October to a sold out crowd. This return performance on Friday, April 10 will likely end up a sold-out show as well. The mega-band just released their new single "Living Zoo" from forthcoming full-length album "Untethered Moon". The track has been getting significant radio play, further strengthening the band's place in indie rock history.

Since the early 1990's Boise-based indie rock godfathers Built to Spill have been one of the genre's most influential artists. Indie bands such as Modest Mouse and Death Cab for Cutie have gone on record as saying Built to Spill was their primary influence when starting their band. BTS have released seven albums to much critical and fan fame, continuously playing sold out worldwide tours and landing in headlining spots on most of the nation's top festival tours over the past decade.

Their albums "Perfect From Now On" and "Keep It Like A Secret" have cemented a place for them in the indie rock hall of fame. But beyond their extensive success w/ Warner Bros Records, BTS has always been best known for their highly emotive live shows. Lead singer and guitarist Doug Martsch is known to have complete command over the guitar, pioneering the use of multiple layered guitar lines by using live guitar-looping techniques. His tight band constantly rediscover their songs live, often changing their form and structures on a nightly basis to create a very spontaneous and in-the-moment live experience.

To listen: http://www.builttospill.com/

Braided Waves, also from Boise, are set to warm up the crowd for the 9pm 21+ show.

To listen:

https://www.facebook.com/pages/Braided-Waves/659103717458266

Tickets are $20, and can be purchased at Velouria Records, The Cellar Door, or at Ticketweb.com

http://www.ticketweb.com/t3/sale/SaleEventDetail?dispatch=loadSelectionData&eventId=5614395

Lindsay

Continued from p. 17

entertainment begins and who pops out of the cake but Kathy Seldon. Don in enchanted by her, but she is less than pleased with him and tries to hit him in the face with a pie, but she hits Lina instead and then, runs away. Don looks for her for weeks and tells his friend Cosmo (Shane Rangel) how much he wants to find her.

Cosmo discovers Kathy on the set of a new movie starring Zelda Zander (Allie Smith). She is playing one of the chorus members. Don and Kathy reunite and discover that they are falling for each other. Meanwhile a new innovation in movies is sweeping the country, Talkies. Don and Lina prepare to jump on the bandwagon and start making talking pictures, but Lina's voice is so harsh that she sounds terrible on screen.

Don, Cosmo, and Kathy cook up a scheme to save the day, but it almost backfires on them. Other members of the cast are Aimee Akin, TJ Moran, Thierry Cervantes, Alex Cha, Victoria Loeffler, Grace Loeffler, Audrey Loeffler, Rosie Regalado, Rebecca Keele, Kallysta Tyler, Laura Grabowski, Emily Moran, Brenda Cervantes, and Jeremy Waterman.

Other performances are April 11, 17, & 18 at 7:30 PM and April 12 & 19 at 2pm. Tickets are available at lindsaycommunitytheater.com. Adults are $15 and Students are $10. Snacks, sodas, beer, and wine are available. Handicap seating is also available.

Upside Down

Continued from p. 17

Sometimes inspiration comes by turning the gourd upside down to create flowers which are some of her favorite art forms.

The work of Jeri Burzin includes various ways of seeing, whether it is looking at a window of wonderful contrasting colors at Ghost Ranch, a reflection of the downtown Fox Theatre, or watching the tide at the beautiful Bluff Trail at Montano de Oro.

Joy Collier paints with acrylics and "Paints what smiles at you!" and enjoys painting the Giant Sequoias and their habitat. She walked the Trail of 100 Giants where she noticed all of the amazing textures of barks, leaf litter and small barely noticeable plants scattered along the ground. These images where the source of her "Upside Down, Inside Out" Leaf Litter painting, which has no up or down and is a true abstraction of nature.

Laurie Gorman has been painting with watercolors for more than a decade and loves to paint the beauty she sees in the wonderful fruits and vegetables that grow naturally here.

Linda Hengst says, "I have marveled at God's creation and analyzed how I could duplicate it in a way that would recreate the moment. Light and shadows and their effects on objects have fascinated me. I enjoy being a farmer's wife and often paint the things we grow on the farm or in my garden."

Beckie Nava shares images of tree "tunnels" over a road, making one wonder, "Are you 'Coming or Going'?" cityscapes of buildings reflected in the surface of another building, and "Half Dome Reflection" which shows a radiant reflection in the Merced River. Nava was raised in the Valley, which has given her a love and respect for nature in the nearby mountains and Central Coast.

Kay Woods quotes Henry Miller: "The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself."

"My camera lens give me the gift of enhanced observations," Woods says, "the channel to become more present, the wondering mind of child, the unfiltered vision of amazement at a sight seen upside down or inside out. I'm currently working on ignoring my Inner Critic and filter."

The artist reception will be held Sunday, April 12 from 2-4pm at the Exeter Courthouse Gallery, 125 B St. in Exeter. The public is invited.

Main Gallery Artists are a group of well-known local artists who exhibit their work together, provide unique art as gifts and additions to art collections, and help organizations with art activities to promote their mission and events. More information can be found at www.maingalleryvisalia.com.

Jazzaffair

Continued from p. 17

Kylie Castro and Friends from Santa Barbara. These young people are the products, in part, of contributions and scholarships to Jazz Camp from the Sierra Traditional Jazz Club. Proceeds from the Jazzaffair go toward scholarships.

The balance of the band line-up for the Festival reads like the who's-who of the Nation's traditional jazz musicians including Bob Draga and Friends, Florida; Cornet Chop Suey, St. Louis, MO; High Street Band, Boise, ID; Jerry Krahn Quartet, Nashville, TN; Wally's Warehouse Waifs, MI and Titan Hot Seven, whose musicians live in several states.

From California, in addition to the host, High Sierra Jazz Band, are Au Brothers/Howard Miyata, Sacramento; Blue Street Jazz Band, Fresno; Flip Oakes Quartet, Oceanside; Night Blooming Jazzmen, Claremont and Tom Rigney and Flambeau, Berkeley.

Bob Draga

Bands will be playing in four venues: Lions Club Roping Arena; St. Anthony's Retreat; Memorial Building and the tent in the Memorial Building parking lot.

Also in keeping with the theme, Jazz Club President Stan Huddleston says, "Bring your children of any age and their tickets will be half-price. Of course, kids under 12 are free with their parents along."

Ticket prices are 3-day, all event, $95; Friday, April 10, $25; Saturday, April 11, $45 and Sunday, April 12, $25. For information, visit www.Jazzaffair.info. Tickets available on-sites at the door.

On Thursday night, April 9, the Lions Club holds a Recognition Dinner, $15, and Jazz Jam, 5 pm at the Arena. The Jazz Jam follows the Lions Barbecue and recognition ceremony and is free.

Symphony

Continued from p. 17

Most of the piece is rousing and turbulent music evoking the national struggle of the Finnish people. To avoid Russian censorship, it had to be performed under alternative names, including "Happy Feelings at the Awakening of Finnish Spring" and "A Scandinavian Choral March."

Tickets are $30 to $39.50 at the symphony office, 208 W. Main Street, Suite D, Visalia, downstairs in Montgomery Square. Student prices are $10. Tickets are also available at 732-8600 or go to www.tularecountysymphony.com.

The concert begins at 7:30pm, but the audience is invited to attend the pre-concert preview by music director Bruce Kiesling at 5:45pm.

Brochures and tickets for next season are now available by contacting the Symphony.

SYMPHONY PLAYERS PERFORM CROSSOVER CONCERT AT CELLAR DOOR

In what the Tulare County Symphony hopes will be the beginning of a series, guest violinist Lindsay Deutsch will perform a contemporary crossover concert with symphony music director Bruce Kiesling at the piano at the Cellar Door at 8pm on Thursday, April 16.

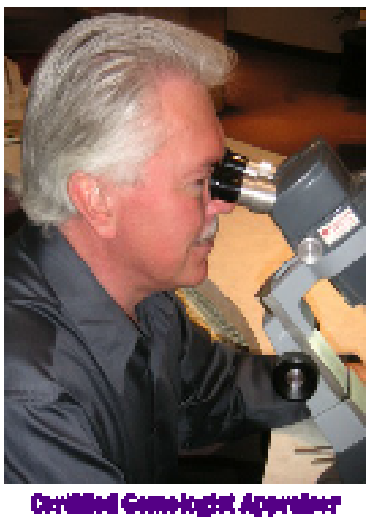
The special concert will be held two days before Deutsch performs at the symphony's season finale concert at the Visalia Fox Theatre on Saturday, April 18.

The Cellar Door concert is made possible by a grant from the City of Visalia Arts Grant program.

The idea to reach new audiences by featuring a classically trained violinist in a contemporary concert is the brainchild of Kiesling and local promoters Aaron Gomes and Ryan Stillwater. The concept of pairing crossover classical artists with genres that have popular appeal (pop and indie rock) has been an ongoing dialogue between these three music enthusiasts for years. Stillwater produced the Airpborne Toxic Event in cooperation with Kiesling, and Gomez is the longtime promoter for the Cellar Door and founder of the Sound N Vision Foundation.

Deutsch seemed the perfect performer to kick off the series. She and her sister run a non-profit called Classics Alive, which exposes youth to music and supports their pursuit of musical learning. Critics praise her for bringing a fresh perspective to classical performances and for having a stage presence and style far beyond her years and a charisma that enthralls audiences.

Tickets are $12 at the Symphony office, 732-8600, or at the door.

More than 40 years in Downtown Visalia
MICHAEL'S Custom Jewelry
559-734-7079
316 W. Main St., Visalia, CA 93291
www.michaelscustomjewelry.com

Certified Gemologist Appraiser
COMPLIMENTARY CLEANING AND INSPECTION OF YOUR JEWELRY
3-D DESIGNS
CERTIFIED APPRAISALS
RING SIZING
RESTRINGING
WATCH REPAIR
WATCH BATTERIES
WATCH BANDS
STONE REPLACEMENT
PRONG RETIPPING
FREE GIFT WRAPPING WITH PURCHASE

Transitions Children's Services
BECOME A FOSTER PARENT!
Open your heart and home to a child in need.
(559) 623-9124
www.transitionschildrensservices.org

Palmer Company Insurance
HOME • AUTO • FARM
COMMERCIAL • LIFE • HEALTH
(559) 562-2522 111 W. Honolulu, Lindsay
IBA WEST

Education

Attendance Area Boundary Special Board Study Session

Visalia Unified School District has scheduled a Special Study Session with the Board of Trustees on Tuesday, April 7 at 6pm in the El Diamante High School Theater to review the public input gathered from the two rounds of public meetings regarding the new maps for its middle school and high school attendance boundaries.

The goal is to balance the existing four middle schools with the new fifth middle school at Akers and Riggin, and to balance the new five middle school boundaries back into the four existing comprehensive high schools.

The Board of Trustees needs ample time for public input, discussion and for Board consideration. This is the first in a series of public meetings with the Board.

No action will be taken at this information-only study session.

Any changes will not be implemented until August, 2016 to coincide with the opening of its newest middle school. To view the proposed maps and prior presentations, visit www.vusd.org/AttendanceAreaBoundaryInfo.

The Board has adopted guiding principles to help in this decision making process.

These are not in priority order; it is understood some conflict may arise and all cannot be achieved, but all should be considered:

- Consider socioeconomic and English language learner equity in the boundary adjustment process
- Maintain existing feeder patterns – Keep students in existing feeder group
- Maintain existing neighborhoods
- Minimize the numbers of schools and students impacted by boundary adjustments
- Consider the transportation costs/student routes to school associated with any boundary adjustment
- Make adjustments for the long term – Avoid having to redraw boundaries for as long as possible
- Consider transfer requests to other District schools
- Minimize changes for families who have been impacted by past boundary adjustments
- Create an appeal process to allow students to stay at their current school, even if their neighborhood is moved to a new school through the boundary adjustment process

PC Students Chosen for PTK All-CA Team

Porterville College students Troy Castillo and Linnett Cazares Madrigal were selected for the 2015 Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) All-California Academic Second Team by the Community College League of California.

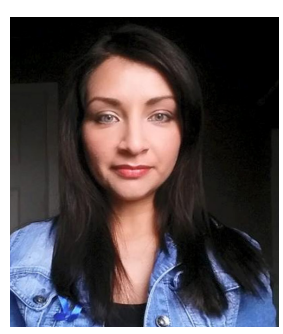
All-State team members receive special recognition at a luncheon and awards ceremony including medallions, certificates with the possibility of stipends and scholarships.

Each two-year college in California may nominate two students per campus to the All-USA Academic Team.

Nominations are based on outstanding academic performance and service to the college and community.

The ceremony to recognize the All-California Academic Team will be held in Sacramento on Tuesday, April 7. For more information, see www.ccleague.org/ptk.

Troy Castillo



Linnett Cazares Madrigal

Porterville College to Hold Job Fair

Porterville College in conjunction with America's Job Center of California is looking for businesses who are hiring for the Third Annual Job Fair on from 9 a.m. to noon, Thursday, May 7 in the Porterville College Gymnasium, 100 East College Avenue in Porterville.

Single booths are available at no charge. Setup is at 8 a.m. Priority service will be observed from 9-9:30 a.m. for military veterans and their families. If you are a business owner who is hiring or a human resources representative and are interested in being part of this event please call (559) 788-1382 or email rroman@edd.ca.gov.

The free event is open to the public. For more information call (559) 788-1382 or visit www.portervillecollege.edu.

PC Registration Dates Approaching

Registration for Porterville College Summer Session and the Fall 2015 Semester is fast approaching. Priority registration for summer/fall 2015 for continuing students begins Wednesday, April 8. Open registration for summer/fall 2015 for returning and new students begins Wednesday, April 22.

Students can register online by visiting the PC website at www.portervillecollege.edu. Students simply fill out an Admission (first time students) or Update form, attend assessment and orientation, visit a counselor and complete a student educational plan, then register for classes on the web. Current students simply need to log into InsidePC, select the Student tab and select "Add or Drop Classes" from Registration Tools. A searchable and downloadable class schedule is available online for students to view what classes are still available, waitlist only or closed.

PC also offers community education (non-credit courses), online, late-start and weekend classes, as well as summer session. Even if you work full time and have a family, Porterville College can help you accomplish your educational goals.

Spring is Basket Time at the Tulare County Library

The annual Basket Drawing sponsored by the Friends of the Tulare County Library is in progress now through Saturday, April 11 at the Visalia Branch Library.

The six baskets, created and donated by Friends members, are on display at the library, and $1 donations are being accepted for tickets for the drawings.

Magic Kingdom

Basket #1 features the Magic Kingdom and contains Disneyland and Disney's California Adventure Park items, including four one-day park hopper tickets. Basket #2 showcases Dinosaurs with a game, books and a variety of toy dinosaurs. The "Frozen" movie is the theme of Basket #3, with Elsa and Anna dolls, Olaf, books and special items included. Gardeners will dig Basket #4 with its seeds, pot, soil, book and $20.00 Lowe's gift card. Basket #5 is for lovers of Chocolate cookies, candy bars, cocoa, mixes and books. Local Heritage is the theme of Basket #6 with books about Visalia by local authors and a $50 gift card to the local Fugazzis' Restaurant all part of the package.

Winners need not be present to win one of the baskets. A special mystery basket will be available only on Saturday at the Fiz-nik Rick event, and the winner of this basket must be present.

Proceeds from the drawings help fund Friends programs at the library.

To see the baskets and obtain tickets, stop by the Circulation Desk of the Visalia branch anytime the library is open. Library hours are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 9am – 8pm; Fridays, 12 noon – 6pm; Saturdays, 9am – 5 pm and closed on Sundays and Mondays. The library is located at 200 W. Oak Street in Visalia.

Print replica at issuu.com/ourvalleyvoice

Soft Thunder Rider's Motorcycle Club Holds 8th Annual Goat Head Run

Sherry Chavarria

Generous business contributions have made it possible for the Soft Thunder Riders' Motorcycle Club to assist motorcyclists battling cancer since 2008. The Goat Head mission statement is: "A Biker event-by Bikers-4 Bikers". Their vision is to raise funds through the Annual Goat Head Run (GHR) and pay forward financial grants to bikers who are battling cancer and in financial need. It may not cure cancer, but they can make a difference and ease the financial stress for some in their final stages.

In 2003, Sherry Chavarria's husband Mitch took her on her first bike run in Tulare, CA. It was a fundraiser for needy children. Bikers came from everywhere and donated money and toys to Rick Allyson, owner of American Thunder Motorcycle shop. Mrs. Allyson visited schools and found children from low income families who would not have a Christmas tree or a Christmas. Hundreds of bikers followed Rick Allyson in his bright red Santa Claus suit on his Harley from home to home giving gifts to children. The spirit of giving was well and alive with the blessing of giving.

Since then, Chavarria has come to be a part of a "biker community" that gives and gives. Each week, year round bikers pay $20 or $30 per person to attend fundraisers. Millions of dollars from motorcyclists are donated to hundreds of causes such as The Lost Girls M/C Annual Breast Cancer Ride or Rides for Lupus, Alzheimer, dementia, to name a few. These bike runs have catchy names such as Toys for Tots, Hogs for Dogs (Police dogs) and grants are forwarded to businesses or committees such as Read for Life that supply children with books and learn about the importance of reading from birth on. Soft Thunder Rider Motorcycle Club is currently a co-committee of the Vietnam Veteran Wall (VVMW) Project, to raise $177,000 to purchase the VVMW Replica that will find its new home at the Dinuba Veteran's Memorial Building.

In this tough economy, there are thousands of self-employed or low income folks whose insurance covers the bare necessities; unfortunately, paying premiums are impossible when one cannot work. In 2008, the 1st Goat Head Run while Mitch still ride, he led the pack of bikers on his last ride. The biker community came together. Mitch and his wife were the recipients who were in need at that time. The Goat Head Run is the first and only foundation in Tulare and Fresno County that raises funds to help "bikers in need" in their battle with cancer, while they are alive to use it where needed.

In 2010, Silus Ceballos was the $1000. GHR. grant Recipient and lost his battle to cancer in 2013.Your donations helped him and his wife Gloria through his final days. In 2012, we were able to award two $1000.00 grants; one to Jim Stein and the other to Jim Sanders. Both men are in remission. In 2013 and 2014 Kip Berg was awarded the $1000 GHR Grant. Berg was in remission for nearly two years, but unfortunately passed away this November, 2014. The common denominators these men share is their love of riding, their battle with cancer, and their humble need for financial assistance.

Progressive cancer patients need regular chemo treatments and are unable to work, often leaving the financial stress on their wives/caretakers, children and loved ones.

Chavarria witnessed firsthand the mental stress of watching her husband's slow death to cancer. The financial burden faced trying to support a household, insurance premiums, office visits, copays medication, gas and car repairs for doctor's visits to Stanford University was too much for one woman to handle alone.

Donations are $10 (for lunch only) or $25/biker. This donation includes a 5-Card Poker stop card, an official Goat Heat lapel pin, music, raffle prizes, go-T contest, lunch and a no host bar. Registration is the day of the event, 9am-9:45am at Visalia Harley Davidson, 30681 CA 99.

For more information, call 733-4647. The ride departs at 10 am sharp. The last stop and lunch will be held at 1pm at The Pump House, 1075 E. Main Street, Visalia.

Soroptimists to Hold 6th Annual Spring Fling on April 11

Staff Reports

Soroptimist International of Visalia is holding their 6th Annual Spring Fling fundraiser on Saturday, April 11 at the Visalia Convention Center. Spring Fling consists of a luncheon catered by Sue Sa's Creative Catering, a fashion show featuring fashions from Dress Barn and from Ruth Ann Rosh, an Independent CAbi Consultant, and a basket opportunity drawing.

Last year 620 attended Spring Fling.

This year's Spring Fling will be hosted by Visalia City Councilwoman, Amy Shuklian. Guests will have the opportunity to purchase opportunity drawing tickets in hopes of winning one or many of our fabulous baskets at the event. Most of the baskets are valued at $100 and up. All baskets and door prizes are donated either by the Soroptimist members or local businesses. Last year, more than 100 baskets were donated to Spring Fling, and this year the club is on track to have the same amount or more. Tickets for the wine tree will also be available for purchase at the event. The lucky winner will win 109 bottles of wine.

For the Visalia club, Spring Fling is their signature fundraiser. The proceeds from the event help support many organizations and individuals in the community. One of the largest organizations that Soroptimist Visalia supports is Karen's House, formerly known as the Battered Women's Shelter. Funds also help to support the Live Your Dream Awards, which honors and awards women who are head of household and have returned to school or training to upgrade their skills and improve their lives and ability to support their families.

Don't miss Spring Fling on Saturday, April 11, 2015 at the Visalia Convention Center. Doors open for the basket preview at 10:30am. Tickets are available at the Convention Center or online at www.sivisalia.org. Cost of the luncheon is $30 each, or a reserved table of 8 for $220. For more information or sponsorship opportunities, contact JoeAnna Todd at (559) 280-3141.

Soroptimist International of Visalia is a subsidiary of Soroptimist International, a global volunteer organization working to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment. The word "Soroptimist" is a coined term meaning "Best for Women."

Soroptimist was founded in 1921 in Oakland, California, by a group of businesswomen who wanted to have a service club similar to those already in existence for men. It has grown from one club to 3,000 clubs with more than 100,000 members in 120 countries throughout the world.

Soroptimist focuses on helping to improve the lives of women and girls, help women achieve economic and political equality, serves as a global voice for women, provides leadership development opportunities for women, and works toward world peace and understanding. This is accomplished through education, scholarships and involvement in community and international service project.

Calendar

Every Third Tuesday, Monthly: The League of Women Voters of Tulare County meets, 11:45am
Enjoy lunch and a discussion at Sue Sa's Club House,699 W. Center in Visalia. A fixed price luncheon for $13.00 inc. tax and tip will be served. The public is welcome. Reservations are required by calling 734-6501.

Through June 4: Women of Tulare County
This exhibit showcases these extraordinary women of Tulare County from 1855 to the present through a series of posters. Women featured include Josephine Allensworth, Anna Mills Johnston, Eleanor Calhoun, Ina Stiner, Annie Mitchell, Mary Garcia Pohot, Rose Ann Vuich, Jean Shepard, Lali Moheno, and Ester Hernandez. This exhibit is on the second floor of the Visalia Branch of the Tulare County Library outside of the Annie R. Mitchell History Room through June 4 and be. Exhibit hours are from 1--5pm, Tuesday--Friday. For more information on this exhibit, please contact Lisa Raney at 713-2723 or the reference desk at 713-2703. The Visalia Library is located at 200 W. Oak Ave, Visalia, CA 93291.

Through June: Visalia Branch Library Teen Homework Center, 3-6:30pm
The Visalia Branch Library offers a place for teens to do their homework Tuesdays through Fridays. The library is located at 200 W. Oak St.

Through June: Tulare Public Library Homework Help
Homework help for children in grades K-12 will be available in the Tulare Public Library Learning Center on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4-7pm and Saturdays from 1-4pm.

Through October 28: Free Fly Casting Instruction, 6-7pm
Kaweah Fly Fishers are offering fly casting lessons at Del Lago Park in Tulare every Wednesday evening until October 28. Rods and reels will be supplied or you may bring your own.

APRIL

April 2: 4th Annual Downtown Visalia Wine & Cheese Walk, 6-9pm
Come enjoy one of downtown Visalia's best events, and possibly discover a favorite winery. Tickets are $35 before March 20, and $40 after. You must be at least 21 to participate. For more information call (559) 732-7737.

April 2: A Community Forum--Envisioning Lemoore's Future, 6pm
The Lemoore Chamber of Commerce will hold a forum at the Train Depot for the public to bring ideas for future retail development in Lemoore.

April 3: P. Kay Woods "Edge" Photography Artist Reception, 5:30-8pm
P. Kay Woods is exhibiting some of her own images of "edges" as seen through her camera lens in the Brandon-Mitchell Gallery at the Spiritual Awareness Center in March and April. An artist reception will be held during the First Friday art walk on April 3 from 5:30-8 p.m. Woods will give a talk about her art at 6pm. The Brandon-Mitchell Gallery is located at the Spiritual Awareness Center, 117 S. Locust Street, Visalia. The gallery is open the first Friday of each month, 5:30-8pm, and Monday-Thursday from 9:30am-3:30pm by ringing the bell. For more information, call 625-2441.

April 4: Color Vibe 5K -- Visalia, 9:00 AM - 11:30 AM
Come get C R A Z Y with us!!! The Color Vibe is coming to Visalia on April 4th and wants you to experience the most #VIBErant 5k of all time! Grab your friends and family and join us as we blast you with lots of fun, epic beats and TONS OF COLOR while you run/walk our course. Children 12 and under are FREE! You'll come as a blank canvas and leave a colorful mural!! A portion of our proceeds will also go towards a local charity, Pro Youth Heart! Sign up now before spots fill up! http://www.thecolorvibe.com/visalia.php# #ColorVibeVisalia

April 4: Distinguished Citizens & Business of the Year Awards Dinner, 6-9pm
The Hanford Chamber of Commerce presents "An Evening of Inspiration" at the Hanford Civic Auditorium. For more information call the Chamber at (559) 582-0483.

April 8: "Early Automobiles" 9:30-11am
presented by Dr. Michael Sullivan in the PC Theater. The talk will be accompanied by an antique auto display courtesy of members of the Horseless Carriage Club of America from the Los Angeles area in the PC Quad area.

April 8: 50+Rocks Spring Open House, 11am-2pm
The Visalia Parks and Recreation Department announces the 50+Rocks Spring Open House at the Visalia Senior Center. The event is free for seniors (except for the $3.50 barbecue) and brings together seniors and the vendors which offer services for them. Please call 713-4381 to get an application for a vendor booth.

April 9: "Transitions--Creating Opportunities for Innovation and Success," 7:30-11am
The Training and Employment Association of Tulare County presents "Transitions--Creating Opportunities for Innovation and Success" at the Visalia Holiday Inn. Single tickets are $35, and a table for 8 is $250. For more information contact Hector Cartagena at (559) 651-1425.

April 10: Maternal Health Summit, 8am-4:30pm
Topics include prenatal health, abuse, trauma during pregnancy, psychological diagnosis and treatment related to pregnancy and delivery, parenting and attachment, integration of services for perinatal women. At the Koinonia Church, 12536 Hanford-Armona Rd., Hanford. To register call (559) 772-8144

April 10-12: Jazzaffair Music Festival
Join us for the 42nd annual Jazzaffair in Three Rivers! This 3 day festival of traditional Dixieland jazz music is one you won't want to miss. Purchase a ticket for the whole event, or just one day. This year's theme is "Jazz for the Generations". Bring your child, any age, and receive their ticket at half price (children under 12 free)! Find all the details and purchase tickets at www.Jazzaffair.info.

April 11: Rally Ride, 8:30am
Starting at Exeter Union High School & Ending at 224 North E Street. Calling all motorcycles, jeeps, hot rods, classic cars and mom-mobiles! Join us as we take a short memorial ride through the area, eat some steak sandwiches, bid on items at the silent auction, buy 50/50 tickets, listen to music, and perhaps donate blood to the Blood Bank, all while honoring Daniel Green and raising funds for his son Aiden.

April 11: Spring Fishing Derby, 9-11am
Bring your fishing pole and tackle to Hidden Valley Park pond for a morning of Rainbow Trout fishing, on the corner of 11th Avenue and Cortner Street.

April 11: 2015 Life Walk, 9am
The 20th Annual Tulare-Kings Right to Life walk will be in Visalia's Plaza Park. For more information call 732-5000.

April 11: Visalia Soroptimist Spring Fling, 10:30am-2:30pm
Celebrate women helping women. Tickets for the opportunity to win a selection of gorgeous baskets will be available for purchase. Tickets are $30 per person or $220 for a table of eight. For more information, call (559) 713-4040

April 12-June 28: "Upside, Down, Inside Out: A Way of Seeing"
The upcoming Main Gallery Artists exhibit at the Exeter Courthouse Gallery is dedicated to Marjorie Brandon and her wonderful way of seeing. The artists include Toni Best, Jeri Burzin, Joy Collier, Laurie Gorman, Linda Hengst, and Kay Woods and the artist reception is Sunday, April 12, 2:00 - 4:00 pm at the Exeter Courthouse Gallery. More information is at www.maingalleryvisalia.com

April 12: Celebrant Singers Bowl-a-thon, 1pm
At AMF Visalia Lanes, 1740 W. Caldwell Ave., check in begins at 1:00 p.m. and the Opening Ceremony is at 2:00 p.m. This is an annual fundraiser to help send Celebrant teams on their International Missions outreaches to Guatemala, El Salvador and Turkey. All members of the community are invited to participate by sponsoring a lane, forming a team, signing up individually to bowl, or sponsoring a bowler. Each sponsored bowler receives a free t-shirt and is eligible to win prizes donated by local businesses. Bowlers raise money through "per pin" pledges or flat donations and will bowl three games. For more information visit www.celebrants.org/bowlathon or call 559-740-4000.

April 13: Great Conversations--"Self Reliance", 4-5:30pm
A discussion of this Great Work by Emerson will take place on the COS main campus in Hospital Rock 133.

April 15 to April 18: Anything Goes
Golden West High School will present the classical musical about the age-old tale of boy meets girl. More than 115 students will participate. For information, visit www.vusd.org

April 16: Rumors of Polar Bears, 7pm (and April 17 at 4:30pm)
La Joya Middle School proudly presents *Rumors of Polar Bears* by Jonathon Dorf through YouthPLAYS. *Rumors of Polar Bears* is about a ragtag band of teens who struggle for survival in the face of a climate induced catastrophe. Despite having to scavenge for food and water, they find fun where they can, frolicking in the 'party pool' and forgetting themselves just long enough to be teenagers. But when forced to flee their makeshift home, they'll encounter everything from failing paradises to a frozen-in-time former pre-kindergarten drama class, deadly bikers determined to turn the chaos into their own new world order, and a mysterious people that even the bikers won't cross. As the road takes its toll, relationships shift – what will happen to this little patchwork family?

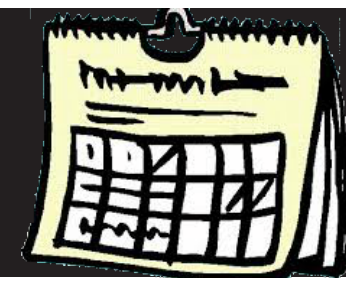
April 17 to 26: The Fantastic Mr. Fox
The Enchanted Playhouse presents "The Fantastic Mr. Fox." The play will be presented on Friday and Saturday at 7pm, and Sunday at 2pm at Main Street Theatre, 307 E. Main, Visalia. For information, visit enchantedplayhouse.org.

April 17: 2nd Annual Hands In the Community Golf Tournament, 12-5pm
Hands in the Community will hold its second annual golf tournament at Valley Oaks Golf Course. Lunch provided. Raffle Tickets, Mulligan, Putting contest extra. $400.00 per Golf Team 1 Hole Sponsor $150.00 2 Hole Sponsor $250.00. For more information contact Lester Moon 559-625-3822.

April 17: **Book Signing and Free Workshop, 5:15-6:30pm**
A 45-minute workshop at the Cosmic Corral--209 N. Irwin St., Hanford, will help you decode your love style. Kay Packard's new book will teach you the fundamentals of how to read the unique markings found on your own hands. Assignments guide you to integrate both understood and misunderstood aspects of yourself into meaningful living-statements.

April 17: Keith Sweat at Eagle Mountain Casino, 8pm
Eagle Mountain Casino welcomes R & B Sensation Keith Sweat to the Event Center. Keith will be singing hits such as "Twisted", "I'll Give All My Love to You", and "I Want to Love you Down". His sensual and rhythmic lyrics will have you swooning, singing and dancing the evening away. Tickets on sale now online or in the gift shop and start at only $30. Summit Club and Black Card members receive $5 off tickets purchased in the gift shop.

April 18: Porterville Iris Festival, 9am-5 pm
Porterville Iris Festival in downtown Porterville with more than 200 vendors including food booths, crafts and information booths. There is an antique and collectibles faire. Entertainment performances on two stages. A chili cook-off will also take place. For more information, see www.irisfestival.



porterville.com

Saturday, April 18-25: Orange Blossom Festival
Keep on Bloomin' is the theme of the Lindsay 83rd Annual Orange Blossom Festival, Saturday, April 18-Saturday, April 25. Various events take place throughout the week, culminating with the Parade at 9 am on Saturday, April 25. For more information, see www.lindsayorangeblossomorg.

April 18: 24th Annual Walk A Dog A Thon/ Furry 5K
Join us Saturday, April 18 at Plaza Park as we walk to raise money and save lives! Fun for all ages featuring a 3-mile walk, a chip-timed 5K run, vendors, raffle and canine contests. Entry fee $25 (minimum donation). Prizes will be given for the "Top Dog" Fundraiser in the following categories: Youth, Teen, Adult, Senior and Team (3 or more members). Ask your family, friends and co-workers to donate. Or form a team and get creative with themes or costumes. Make an online donation http://vospca.org/participate/donate/general-donation-form/

April 18—New Planets!! 1pm
Make and launch a rocket to the Asteroid Belt. Play a board game to get your rocket to new planets Vesta and Ceres! Explore the planets at ImagineU With a NASA ambassador in March, April and May**.** ImagineU Children's Museum is excited to have its very own NASA/Jet Propulsion Lab solar system ambassador, Susan Morrison, coming to Visalia to teach science in a fun, interactive way. These Saturday events are free with admission price (free for members). ImagineU is located at 700 E. Main St., Visalia. It is open Wednesday through Friday from 10-4 and Saturday from 12-4. Cost is $5 for adults and children 2 and over. Children under 2 are free. For more information, call 733-5975 or go to www.imagineumuseum.com

April 18: Book signing, Free Mini-Hand-Readings, and Wine Tasting, 4:30-6:30pm
At the Totem Market and Deli (under new management) – at the entrance to Sequoia National Park 45186 Sierra Drive, Three Rivers. Kay Packard's new book will teach you the fundamentals of how to read the unique markings found on your own hands.

April 18: Colossal Collage, 7:30pm
Tulare County Symphony Orchestra closes out its season with the "other" great Symphony No. 5, the one by Mahler. The concert will be held at the Visalia Fox Theatre. For information, visit tularecountysymphony.com.

April 19: Spaghetti Feast Fundraiser, 11:30am-2pm
Help make the Exeter Bark Park the best park in the Valley. Take home a delicious meal from Pete's Fresh Grill. Tickets are $10 and can be purchased from any member of the Bark Park committee, at Tangles Salon or the Exeter Chamber of Commerce. For more information call 592-5396

April 22: Labor Law Compliance Series, 7-10am.
The Visalia Chamber of Commerce, in cooperation with Pacific Employers, will present the state-mandated Supervisors' Sexual Harassment Prevention Training Seminar & Workshop at the Lamp Liter Inn. Registration & Breakfast 7:30-8 am; Seminar 8-10am. Reservations required. For more information call the Chamber, 734-5876.

April 22: "Ecological Restoration in a Time of Mass Extinction" 11:30am-12:30pm
Chief Scientist of the National Park Service, Dr. David Graber, will speak in the PC Theater. Conservation scientists around the globe are in broad agreement that the earth has entered a mass extinction event. Unlike past mass extinctions, which were associated with extreme geological events, it is evident that this event is the consequence of landscape conversion to human use, and anthropogenic global warming. As tragic as this is for those who value nature, there are encouraging examples of ecological restoration in our region ranging from individual species to whole ecosystems. The event is open to the public and free to attend. Please visit the front desk to obtain a parking permit.

April 22 to May 1: Treasures of Ireland
The Visalia Chamber of Commerce offers this group trip, which includes airfare, 11 meals and a professional travel guide. For information, call 734-5876.

April 23: Honor A Hero, Hire A Vet Job & Resource Fair, 9am-2pm
For Veterans, Military, National Guard, Reservist and their dependants, this year's job fair will be held in the Golden Eagle Arena at West HillsCollegeLemoorecampus,locatedat555CollegeAvenue in Lemoore. For more information call James Bradford at (559) 852-2151.

April 23: The Visalia Chamber is hosting the 2nd Annual "State of Business Expo" 3-7pm
The Business Expo highlights the best of the best in Visalia Business. We invite you to learn lessons from local entrepreneurs and partner with the Chamber as an active participant in the Expo. This event is a great way to highlight your business while networking in your community and partnering with your chamber of commerce.

April 23 & 24: Sleeping Beauty: A Musical Comedy
Mt Whitney Drama Dept. proudly presents 'Sleeping Beauty: A Musical Comedy' on April 23rd and 24th at Rotary Theater. This show is an updated version of the modern tale including both opera and rock music. Doors open at 6:30pm, and show starts at 7:00pm. Tickets may be purchased at the door: $8 for Adults and $6 for students. You won't want to miss this charming play which is perfect for the entire family. For further information, please contact Stephanie Francis at 559-730-7602 or email sfrancis@vusd.org.

April 24: Wellness and Informational Fair for Seniors, Families and Caregivers, 9am-2pm
Wellness and Informational Fair for Seniors, Families, and Care givers at Quail Park Retirement Village from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. This event will provide information and resources for seniors and several free health screenings. Raffle prizes and refreshments. For additional information, please call 624-3503. Quail Park is located at 4520 W. Cypress Ave., Visalia.

MAY

April 25: Civil War 360 Sprint Car Series
Civil War 360 Sprint Car Series presented by Flowmaster will be held at Thunderbowl Raceway at Tulare Fairgrounds. Western RaceSaver Sprints and Vintage Cars will also be held. For information, visit www.thunderbowlraceway.com.

Sunday, April 26, 8 am
Budweiser Sequoia Cycling Classic returns to Visalia with racers from around the West Coast competing. A day of fun is planned for the whole family in downtown Visalia including food booths, information booths. Children's races will also take place as a feature of the event. For more information, see www.bikereg.com/sequoiaclassic

April 27: Great Conversations--"Out of the Cradle, Endlessly Rocking", 4-5:30pm
A discussion of this Great Work by Whitman will take place on the COS main campus in Hospital Rock 133.

May 1: The 10th Annual Habitat for Humanity Birdhouse Auction, 6:30-10pm
The Habitat for Humanity Birdhouse Auction will celebrate 10 years of fun and fundraising on Friday, May 1, 2015. This unique event brings together community leaders, creative artists and local flavors to support the vision that every man, woman and child should have a decent, affordable place to live. Tickets are $75 each. For more information call 734-4040.

May 2: Montessori Builders Bash, 6pm
1620 W. Beverly Dr., Visalia. Tickets are $50 per person, $80 per couple.

May 2: USAC Western Midgets
USAC Western Midgets, Vintage Cars and Western RaceSaver Sprints will be held at Thunderbowl Raceway at Tulare Fairgrounds. For information, visit www.thunderbowlraceway.com.

May 8: Business Seminar Series Diversity Training, 3:30-5pm
At the train depot/Lemoore Chamber. Tickets $15 for members, $20 for non-members. For more information call (559) 924-6401.

May 9—Gravity! 1pm
Learn what gravity does to you and why people seem to float while on the International Space Station. Then make a space station module with a floating astronaut in it! Explore the planets at ImagineU With a NASA ambassador in March, April and May**.** ImagineU Children's Museum is excited to have its very own NASA/Jet Propulsion Lab solar system ambassador, Susan Morrison, coming to Visalia to teach science in a fun, interactive way. These Saturday events are free with admission price (free for members). ImagineU is located at 700 E. Main St., Visalia. It is open Wednesday through Friday from 10-4 and Saturday from 12-4. Cost is $5 for adults and children 2 and over. Children under 2 are free. For more information, call 733-5975 or go to www.imagineumuseum.com

May 9: Barks & Bourbon, 5:30-10pm
Friends of Tulare Animal Services is having its First Annual Barks & Bourbon to be held on May 9,2015, at Heritage Center Social Hall. Friends of Tulare Animals Services is the non-profit arm of Tulare Animal Services. We are a 501(c)(3), and are totally self funded through donations. We are raising funds to support our growing rescue efforts of shelter animals. Contributions to Friends of Tulare Animal Services are fully tax-deductible.

May 11: Great Conversations-- excerpt from *Democracy in America*, 4-5:30pm
A discussion of this Great Work by Tocqueville will take place on the COS main campus in Hospital Rock 133.

May 15: TCOE presents Slick Rock Student Film Festival, Noon to Midnight
Premiere Screening and Awards Ceremony at Visalia Fox Theater. The Slick Rock Student Film Festival is Central California's premier film competition for middle and high school students in Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, Merced and Tulare counties. It is a program of the Tulare County Office of Education with support from the Tulare & Kings Counties Suicide Prevention Task Force. Slick Rock challenges students to meet industry standards in the technical aspects of film production. The competition is divided into two levels: middle school and high school. Each level offers a variety of film genres for participation. For more information, contact Slick Rock staff at slickrock@tcoe.org.

May 16: Chris & Brian Faria Memorial--King of the West 410
Sprint Car Series, USAC West Coast 360 Sprint Cars, Western RaceSaver Sprints will be held at Thunderbowl Raceway at Tulare Fairgrounds. For information, visit www.thunderbowlraceway.com.

May 30: USAC West Coast 360 Sprints
USAC West Coast 360 Sprints, USAC Western Midgets, Western RaceSaver Sprints and Vintage Cars will be held at Thunderbowl Raceway at Tulare Fairgrounds. For information, visit www.thunderbowlraceway.com.

JUNE

June 18: Visalia Chamber of Commerce 2015 Annual Awards Celebration, 6-9:30pm
The Visalia Chamber of Commerce 2015 Annual Awards celebration honoring Man, Woman and Businesses of the Year will be held at the Visalia Convention Center. Tickets are $70.00 each or a table of 8 for $520.00

See more events online ourvalleyvoice.com

Sports

Finding Consistency for the COS Giants

Stefan Barros

The College of the Sequoias baseball team is more than halfway through its season, and they are trying to re-kindle the magic that was their 2014 season, when they made it all the way to the state championship tournament.

The Giants record currently stands at 13 wins and 11 losses, and with that, Head Coach Jody Allen is trying to find consistency from his players.

"There is inconsistency with the young players, and some of the sophomores as well. We had more consistency from the leadership guys last year, and we're just trying to find that this season," he said.

"I've been extremely frustrated with the lack of consistency," Allen continued. "We've shown that we can beat the best pitching in our league, but we just can't keep it going. We have shown slight improvement in that area though."

Allen elaborated a little more.

"A couple of weeks back we got 20 hits and scored nine or 10 runs against one of the best pitchers in our league; a guy with an ERA just 1.00. Then, we come back the next week and struggle to hit against a pitcher that wasn't nearly as good. It's just another example of the inconsistency we've had this season," he said.

At the other end of the spectrum, though, Giants pitching has been a pleasant surprise for Coach Allen.

"Coming into the season I worried about the depth we would have with the pitching staff, but it has been a strong suit so far. We have freshman, Jonathan Molina, who has been our Tuesday starter, which means that he usually faces the other team's best pitcher. He's done real well. We also have Thomas Dunahew, another freshman, who has been our Thursday starter. He's shown some real consistency for us," he said.

"We have guys like (Gene) Cachu, and (Zach) Fleeman, who have been doing well for us, who are sophomores. Blake Edmondson has been doing his thing as our closer, he just hasn't had the opportunity in close games like he did last year," Allen added.

Allen does still see players like Kelly and Edmondson as his team leaders, just like he did before the season.

"They have tried to lead for us all season long, with their play, but they have been frustrated with their own performances on the field at times. They've been good for us though," he added.

College of the Sequoias' first baseman at practice.

Though his team has yet to perform to the level of last year, Allen still believes that his team can get to the postseason, and possibly do some damage once they get to that point, he said.

"We are definitely a playoff caliber club. If we can be more consistent, we can make a run," he said. "We have guys on this team that have been tested in the playoffs and have performed. We just have to put some consistent games together. We are capable."

After hosting their spring tournament, playing Bakersfield College and Saddleback College, the Giants will re-open conference play at home on Tuesday, April 7 vs. West Hills Coalinga. Game time will be at 1 pm, and it will be a three game series. They will also host West Hills in the final game of the series on Saturday, April 11.

Rawhide Become First MiLB Team to Employ Australian Front Office Staffer

Staff Reports

With the excitement of Opening Day approaching, the Rawhide are proud to announce a ground-breaking addition to their Front Office staff.

Matt Cooper

Matt Cooper, who was previously the General Manager of the Sydney Blue Sox of the Australian Baseball League, has joined the club as Baseball Operations Manager. While multiple Australian-born baseball players have played professional baseball in America, Matt is the first to become a full-time member of a Minor League front office.

"We're very excited to welcome Matt to Visalia," said Rawhide General Manager Jennifer Pendergraft. "He's proven his work ethic and passion for this industry in Sydney, and we know he's going to be an outstanding addition to our award-winning staff."

A lifelong baseball enthusiast who played the sport for 17 years, Cooper began working in the fledgling Australian Baseball League upon its inception in 2010, and worked his way up to the lead executive position with the Blue Sox. His experience culminated in his involvement with the 2014 MLB Opening Series in Sydney, which saw the Los Angeles Dodgers play the Arizona Diamondbacks at the historic Sydney Cricket Grounds.

In his new role with the Rawhide, Cooper will help oversee various aspects of ballpark operations, including clubhouse logistics, team travel coordination, serving as the Diamondbacks' point person for affiliate relations, and assisting with player appearances in the community.

"I'm incredibly delighted to be working in Visalia, and I'm looking forward to getting to grips with Minor League Baseball," Cooper said. "I've heard so many great things about the organization from people around the industry, and it's an honor to join such a great staff. I'm also hopeful that more Australians will follow and become involved in baseball management as the sport continues to grow."

Additionally, Cooper is good-naturedly hopeful that he can assist in breaking Chopper's Curse, which has kept Visalia without a California League title since 1978.

"Like Steve Irwin and all Australians, I'm an expert with amphibious reptiles," Cooper says with a laugh. "I plan to help create an even more welcoming habitat for his spirit, and help break this hex for good."

The Rawhide open their 2015 season (and the defense of their Northern Division Championship) on Monday, April 9 at Rawhide Ballpark against High Desert.

Wine & Beer Tasting
At
Redwood Room
Totem Market & Gifts
BBQ & Deli
J&J Cellars - Kelsey See Canyon Vineyards
(559) 561-4463
45186 Sierra Drive, Three Rivers

©2015 A&W Restaurants, Inc.
ALL AMERICAN FOOD®
OUR LOCATIONS
TULARE: 133 N. "J" Street EXETER: 420 N. Kaweah
VISALIA: 301 N. Willis St • 2611 S. Mooney Blvd • 2124 W. Riggin Ave
HANFORD: 1113 N. 10th Ave • 1675 W. Lacey Blvd (Hanford Mall Food Court)

Great Conversations

Pascal's Pensées: Skepticism and Belief

Joseph R. Teller

This week the Great Books group discussed the Pensées of Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), the 17th century mathematician and philosopher. The Pensées, a collection of reflections and notes first published in 1670, were intended to become a philosophical defense of the Christian religion. Pascal died before he could complete the project, but the Pensées are his major contribution to the history of philosophy, presenting both his probing philosophical skepticism as well as his profound faith.

Blaise Pascal

One of Pascal's basic assumptions is that people distract themselves from reflecting on their "feeble mortal condition," as he writes in a famous passage: "the sole cause of man's unhappiness is that he does not know how to stay quietly in his room." Humanity, Pascal argues, is driven by two paradoxical motives: on the one hand, we "seek external diversion and occupation," but on the other hand, we also believe "the only true happiness lies in rest and not in excitement."

For Pascal, philosophy must begin with the quiet (and depressing) recognition that "in this life there is no true and solid satisfaction, that all our pleasures are mere vanity, that our afflictions are infinite, and finally that death…must in a few years infallibly face us with the inescapable and appalling alternative of being annihilated or wretched throughout eternity." In the face of this, Pascal believes that "all our dignity consists in thought" and in "thinking well," and he marvels at what our reason can discover through the newly emerging scientific method. But he claims that we must ultimately stand in awe at both the colossal vastness of the universe and the impenetrable, mysterious minuteness of even the smallest observable phenomena around us.

For Pascal, man is "a thinking reed," the "weakest in nature," standing in the middle of the abyss of the unknown and unknowable. Thus, pure reason can only take us so far; the heart, Pascal writes, "has its reasons of which reason knows nothing," by which Pascal means that we can only intuit rather than prove certain philosophical truths (like the fact that there is a reality or that spatial dimensions and numbers are real).

Despite his early modern skepticism, though, Pascal's ultimate philosophical solution is belief in God, who alone knows all, and in whom consists true happiness. While Pascal laments our fragile mortality and profound intellectual limits, he also believes that God is accessible to our reason within the Christian Church, and that ultimately, a "reasonable person" will either "serve God with all their heart," or "seek God with all their heart." So confident is Pascal's faith that he formulates his famous "wager" for the non-believer, arguing (1) that each of us must decide whether or not we believe God exists, and (2) that it is reasonable to wager that God exists, because if we're wrong, we lose nothing, but if we're right, we gain eternity.

Our discussion was robust. Though some readers accepted that most people instinctively seek happiness and goodness, many disagreed with Pascal's claim that a reasonable person must believe in God or be looking for him, while others vehemently rejected Pascal's assumption that the only way to be happy in this life is to look forward to an afterlife.

But whatever one's beliefs, the text forces us to ask questions about faith and skepticism as pertinent today as they ever were: what are the limits of faith, and of reason? Are faith and reason complementary or contradictory? What role does intuition or the "heart" play in rationality? What is the foundation of knowledge—and what does it mean to "know" something in the first place?

Read for Life Offers Scholarships

Staff Reports

Read for Life is in search of graduating high school seniors to apply for its "Pass the Word" for literacy student scholarship award by Friday, May 1.

Students interested in applying for this award must have volunteered or been involved in projects and/or activities that have promoted, encouraged or improved literacy in Tulare County within their school and/or community. One student will receive a $500 scholarship donated by Visalia County Center Rotary, which must be used by Dec. 31, 2015.

Applications and requirements for this award are posted at ReadforLife.org. Completed applications must be submitted and received by 6pm on May 1 to rfl@readforlife.org or by mail to: Read for Life – Pass the Word, P.O. Box 3342, Visalia, CA 93278 (applications must be received by Read for Life, not just postmarked May 1).

April CHAP Travels to the 1980's And Back

Staff Reports

Porterville College's Cultural Historical Awareness Program will continue its spring schedule on Wednesday, April 8 with a special event, "Early Automobiles" presented by Dr. Michael Sullivan in the PC Theater.

The talk will be accompanied by an antique auto display courtesy of members of the Horseless Carriage Club of America from the Los Angeles area in the PC Quad area from 9:30 - 11am. This event is open to the public and free to attend. Please visit the front desk to obtain a parking permit for the event.

In travel "Back to the '80s," Porterville College staff and students present their annual concert featuring skits, live music and lip-synched renditions of music, movies and culture from the 1980's on Friday, April 17. There will be two shows, 5 pm or 7:30 pm in the PC Theater. Parking permits will not be required for the event.

On Wednesday, April 22, CHAP will hold a special lunch-time talk, "Ecological Restoration in a Time of Mass Extinction" by retired chief scientist of the National Park Service, Dr. David Graber in the PC Theater.

Conservation scientists around the globe, are in broad agreement that the earth has entered a mass extinction event. Unlike past mass extinctions, which were associated with extreme geological events, it is evident that this event is the consequence of landscape conversion to human use and anthropogenic global warming. As tragic as this is for those who value nature, there are encouraging examples of ecological restoration in the local region ranging from individual species to whole ecosystems. The talk will take place from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm in the PC Theater. The event is open to the public and is free to attend. Please visit the front desk to obtain a parking permit for the event.

The Porterville College Cultural and Historical Awareness Program (CHAP) was organized in 2002 to enhance students' awareness of certain important aspects of our society to which they may previously have had little or no exposure. A theme is chosen by CHAP members each school year, and faculty members across the campus are encouraged to integrate elements of that theme into their coursework. Additionally, a variety of field trips, guest speakers, panel discussions and videos are presented throughout the year and are all open to the public. For more information about CHAP, call Richard Osborne at (559) 791-2298.

Porterville College is located at 100 E. College Avenue in Porterville. For more information, visit www.portervillecollege.edu, or call (559) 791-2200.

Visalia Chamber Announces Slideshow Presentation for Reflections of Italy Tour

Staff Reports

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce is offering a chance to travel to Italy. Some of the highlights of this trip consist of visits to Rome, Assisi, Perugia, Siena, Florence, Chianti Winery, Venice, Murani Island and Milan. The Chamber will host a slideshow presentation featuring the Italy tour at the Chamber office on Wednesday, April 8 from 12-1pm. A sales representative from the Collette Vacations will be on hand to answer questions and talk about the tour.

The nine-day trip, departing on November 10 and returning on November 18, includes 13 meals--seven breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 5 dinners--along with the round trip air from the Fresno-Yosemite Air Terminal.

Reflections of Italy begins with an overnight flight from Fresno to Italy. The tour director will meet visitors at the airport and assist in getting to the hotel where there will have time to rest and relax while preparing to explore.

The tour begins with a visit to Rome and in the evening enjoy a welcome dinner with fellow travelers. The next morning visitors will be introduced to some of the history and traditions of Rome. There's a trip to the Vatican City with an optional tour to the Vatican Museum and St. Peter's Basilica. On to Assisi and take a guided walking tour of the old city, including the Basilica of St. Frances. Then visitors will travel to medieval Perugia, the historic capital of Umbria.

The following day brings a visit the mystical city of Siena. Delight in its narrow Gothic streets, magnificent palaces and historic Piazza del Campo. After a walking tour, there is time to explore the medieval corners of Siena and visit the local shops and outdoor cafes. The next day in Florence, visit the world-famous Academy Gallery to see Michelangelo's incredible statue of David and also view the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, the Palazzo Vecchio and the church of Saint Croce. The following day brings exploration of Venice and visit the historic winery in the heart of the Chianti region.

Visitors travel to nearby Murano Island from the water. Then, a return to Venice and St. Mark's Square, the cultural hub of the city. Uncover the stories of Venice as a local expert guides a walking tour of the area featuring St. Mark's Basilica, the Doge's Palace, the Bridge of Sighs and the Clock Tower with its famous Moors. Then a visit to Millan. Take in some of the city's amazing sights on a locally panoramic tour including the Duomo which is the third largest church in Europe.

This tour is presented by the Chamber's travel partner Collette. For more information on the Chamber travel program, contact Nicola Wissler at (559) 734-5876, or visit, www.visaliachamber.org and click on the travel link for details itineraries and pricing information.

Health

Healthy Tulare County Week Offers Awareness Events

The Tulare County Public Health Department and some of its partners are offering awareness events designed to improve the overall wellness of the county during "Healthy Tulare County Week," April 6-10, celebrated in conjunction with National Public Health Week.

"Healthy Tulare County celebrates the small day-to-day changes that can greatly improve our health," said Steve Worthley, chairman of the Tulare County Board of Supervisors. "Tulare County is collaborating with many of our community partners, so please take the time to join in our efforts as we strive toward healthier communities in Tulare County."

Community events during Healthy Tulare County Week include:

Monday, April 6 — Promoting a healthy community 2030: The raising of awareness of best practices as the county strives to improve the health of our community by the year 2030. Take a survey on Facebook and Twitter, or at tiny.cc/healthytulare, to tell what you would like to see in the community to increase health.

Tuesday, April 7 — Living active: The benefits of physical activity are promoted by offering free day gym passes for some area gyms on Twitter and Facebook. Free dance exercise class is offered at the Farmersville Community Center, 6323 N. Avery St., from 8:30-9:30 am and from 6-7:30 pm at Sand Creek Apartments, 41020 Rd. 124, Orosi. A free Bailoton Dance Marathon and health fest is being held at Del Lago Park in Tulare from 5-7:00pm. The Tulare County Fire Department is offering bike rodeos with an obstacle course, bike clinic and helmets as prizes at the Doyle Colony, Pixley, Cutler and Ivanhoe stations.

Wednesday, April 8 — Improving how we eat: There will be tasty food demos at the Cutler Senior Center, 12691 Ave. 408 in Cutler from 10:30-11:30am, at State Foods Supermarket, 250 E. Antelope Ave. in Woodlake from 2:30-3:30pm, and "My Kitchen, My Health" food demos from 6-7:30pm at the Sand Creek Apartments 41020 Rd. 124, Orosi, and the Farmersville Community Center.

Thursday, April 9 — Breaking bad habits: County residents are encouraged to avoid tobacco and excessive alcohol consumption that can lead to increased health risks. The Public Health Department will be conducting a storefront advertisement and retail compliance check from 9-10am at Jack's Git n Go, 105 N. J St., Tulare. Join us on Facebook and Twitter for more information.

Friday, April 10 — Knowing your numbers: Get a free screening for key biometrics like blood pressure, blood sugar and BMI at the Visalia Health Care Center, 2611 N. Dinuba Blvd. from 9am-noon and from 9am-5pm at the Tulare Community Health Clinic at 1101 N. Cherry, and many other locations like Woodville, South Tulare, Tulare Outreach Services, and United Health Centers in Earlimart. Screenings will be offered by Tulare Regional Medical Center at their two clinics in Tulare and Lindsay. Screenings will also be from 10am through 4:30pm are at Tulare Union High School and from 3-6pm at the Porterville Resource Center, Linda Vista Apartments in Ivanhoe, Carl Smight Middle School in Terra Bella, and Pixley Elementary School with Family Health Care Network. Check www.tchhsa.org under the Spotlight section for more locations and addresses.

"Our policies and our focus is on increasing health and decreasing obesity and chronic disease here in Tulare County," said Dr. Karen Haught, Tulare County Public Health Officer. "Join us as we work in collaboration with our community partners to offer engaging and specific ways in which you can increase your health and the health of your whole family."

Partners include the Tulare County Board of Supervisors, Tulare County Public Health, the Tulare County Health Advisory Committee, Tulare County Fire Department, Kaweah Delta Foundation, Anthem Blue Cross, Comité del Valle Central, Family Health Care Network, Tulare County Office of Education, Lifestyles Center, Evolutions, Iron Grip, In-Shape, Visalia Health Care Center, United Health Centers, Tulare Community Health Clinic, State Foods Supermarket, Cutler Senior Center, Tulare Union High School, Tulare County Human Resources & Development and other county departments.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, routine childhood immunizations save 22,000 lives and $9.9 million in health care costs each year.

Did you know?

- Small changes to diet and lifestyle can mean great gains in losing weight and preventing heart disease, diabetes and other chronic diseases. The percentage of adults who are overweight or obese (2011/12) in Tulare County is 72.5 percent as compared to the state average of 59.8 percent. Each community member can play a part in making a change starting today! Visit www.facebook.com/TulareCountyHHSA for tips on nutrition and exercise.
- Did you know that tobacco is the single most preventable cause of death in the nation? The percentage of adults who smoke in Tulare County (2011/12) is 17.8 percent as compared to the state average of 13.8 percent. Quitting is very tough, but there is help. Call 1-800-No Butts, and read about the benefits of quitting here: http://tchhsa.org/hhsa/index.cfm/risk-and-prevention/tobacco-awareness-and-education/resources/
- It is estimated that 15.2 percent of the Tulare County population has been diagnosed with diabetes versus 8.4 percent of the California population, statewide. This translates into 46,000 Tulare County residents living with diabetes. The most common type of diabetes, Type II Diabetes, can often be prevented or its effects moderated through getting enough exercise and eating a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables and low in refined carbohydrates such as white flour, white rice, and sugar. (source: California Health Interview Survey 2011-2012).
- The mortality rate from coronary heart disease in Tulare County is 147.2 (2009-2011) while for the state of California, it is 122.4 per 100,000 population. Recommendations to prevent heart disease are to avoid smoking and second hand smoke, have cholesterol levels and blood pressure checked on a regular basis, and follow doctor recommendations for treatment if high. Additionally, eat a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables and low in saturated fats, and engage in regular physical activity such as walking or other exercise. (source: California Department of Public Health County Health Status Profile 2013).

The Lifestyle Center has educated, certified and experienced fitness professionals available to help you achieve your goals.

THE Lifestyle Center
A Division of Kaweah Delta Health Care District

Coming Soon!

Expanded Childcare & New Dynamic Strength and Functional Fitness Areas

For more information on The Lifestyle Center, or to schedule a private tour please call

(559) 624-3400

www.thelifestylecenter.org

Certain restrictions may apply. Offer not valid with any other offers or discounts. See a membership representative for details. Offer valid 4/1/2015 through 5/31/2015.

Agriculture

Seed Business Reacts to Water Shortages

Ching Lee, CFBF

With limited water supplies again this year, California farmers will be forced to leave fields idled in order to save water for their permanent crops. Those empty fields mean reduced sales and shifts in demand for companies that supply seed for crops such as rice, cotton and vegetables.

Even for crops where demand has remained strong, such as processing tomatoes, companies that produce transplants keep watch on water supplies and long-term acreage trends. Greenhouses at California Transplants in Stanislaus County, which produce seedlings for processing tomatoes, remain full and busy, said Ted Woods, the company's president and general manager.

California farmers produced a record tomato crop last year—in many cases by not planting other crops in order to marshal their available water for tomatoes. With tomato processors wanting to increase production again this year, Woods said his company—which has processing tomato transplants as 99 percent of its business—has increased production by 10 percent the last two years.

"Most of our growers have wells and supplemental water supplies, and they're able to get by. I just don't know how long they can continue to do this without some rain," he said.

Woods said his sales team wants him to expand production even more, but he's concerned about the long-term impact of the drought. His greenhouses rely on surface water from the Delta-Mendota Canal for irrigation, and for the last two years, there has been zero allocation. Woods said he's getting by with carryover water, which he noted will be enough for two more years of production. After that, he would need to supplement with groundwater.

At HM Clause, the company's seed sales have remained steady even though farmers are reducing acreage due to lack of water, said Marc Beoshanz, a technical sales representative for the San Joaquin Valley region, who said sales of some products have actually increased.

Where the company is seeing the increase, he added, is with newer products that offer traits growers desire, such as a new cantaloupe variety that increases shipping and storage capacities. Although some farmers are choosing not to grow melons at all this year, those who are growing them lean toward these new varieties, he said.

Crops that use less water, such as garbanzo beans, also are on the rise, he noted. But perhaps the biggest change he's seen in the last two to three years is the production of broccoli moving away from the San Joaquin Valley to primarily the state's coastal region.

"That's one where we have seen a reduction in sales," Beoshanz said. "It's because broccoli is a very water-intensive crop. If (farmers) have the option to not grow that crop and save some water, then that's something they look at."

Rich Hoffman, a sales representative for TS&L Seeds whose customers are largely in the central San Joaquin Valley, said his personal sales have dropped because farmers are not growing as many acres. Mostly, they are cutting back on crops such as melons, onions and fresh-market tomatoes they feel may not bring as high a return, he added.

Hoffman said he also has seen more vegetable production migrating from the central San Joaquin Valley to the southern part of the valley or to the Sacramento Valley, where there might be more water. Those vegetable plantings, he added, may be replacing crops such as cotton, "which used to be big in Kern County."

Growers are expected to plant less cotton again this year, with falling prices as an added disincentive, said Harry Peck, sales representative for Phytogen Seed Co., which produces seed for the bulk of the state's pima cotton acreage. California cotton acreage last year fell by 23 percent from 2013, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"My expectation is it will be off another 20 percent," Peck said. "Pricing plays into it, but the biggest issue right now is water."

Roger Isom, president and CEO of the California Cotton Ginners and Growers Associations, said while farmers will probably grow less cotton this year, he doesn't think the reductions will be much more than last year's. He acknowledged lower prices make the crop less attractive to farmers in drought years, but noted there is still high demand for quality cotton—both upland and pima—as there is practically no carryover.

Ted Woods, president and general manager of California Transplants in Stanislaus County, checks on tomato seedlings in a greenhouse. He began shipping transplants to growers in the southern San Joaquin Valley in mid-February. Continued strong demand for processing tomatoes has kept his greenhouses full and busy, he said. Photo: Ching Lee/CFBF

He also noted that cotton growers have been able to cut water use with irrigation techniques such as buried drip, which allows them to water just in the plant's root zone. With good yields and quality the last three years, Isom said, "As bad as everything else is, it's not that bad of a time to be growing cotton."

As manager of Sacramento Valley Seed Co. in Colusa County, Bruce Rolen said he expects to sell less rice seed again this year, noting that his sales dropped 30 percent last year, when farmers reduced their plantings by 25 percent from 2013 acreage.

"We are anticipating very close to the same thing this year, and that's with a little bit of hope put into it," said Rolen, who grows rice himself.

The loss of sales will means layoffs, less hiring of seasonal employees and probably some reduction of permanent positions, he said.

Rolen said rice farmers are growing more early-maturing varieties that cut their season short, allowing them to use less water. Anticipating high demand for these varieties again this year, the company plans to procure about 20 percent more of those seeds, he said, but noted there is a limited quantity.

For forage crops such as alfalfa, Ron Cornish, general manager of Alforex Seeds, said he did not see a significant drop in his seed sales for what was planted this past fall.

"I think with high hay prices, the demand is strong enough from the dairies that people continued to place acres," he said.

But he acknowledged that with so many farmers facing another year of little or no surface water deliveries, and with milk prices dropping for dairy farmers, there will probably be fewer acres of alfalfa planted this spring. Farmers may turn instead to growing crops such as sorghum or sudangrass that require less water, but he said it is still early for them to make those decisions.

The drought has also affected the company's alfalfa seed production in the Central Valley, where fewer growers are able to grow the seeds, forcing the company to seek contracts in the Imperial Valley and other states, Cornish said.

For Michael Newman, owner of Corona Seeds Inc. in Ventura County, the drought has had "minimal effect" on the vegetable seed business, he said, adding that his coastal growers haven't been as heavily hit as those in the San Joaquin Valley. Also, his California clients make up only about a third of his business, with the rest outside the country.

"Our sales have been going up, regardless of the drought," he said. "But we can't tell whether they would go up even more if we all had plenty of water."

(Ching Lee is an assistant editor of Ag Alert. She may be contacted at clee@cfbf.com.)

Eggsplaining Easter

It is thought that Easter eggs began through the hard boiling of eggs to keep them eatable following Lent. Orthodox churches included eggs as being omitted from the diet as a part for Lent.

Decorating became a part of the celebration, with flowers added to the boiling water to provide coloration. Thus, came the start the beginning of Easter eggs.

The Easter rabbit dates back in German folklore as the Easter Hare, who much like Santa Claus, judged whether children had been bad or good. He would carry a basket filled with colored eggs, and sometimes presents and candy to the homes of "good" children. This was documented in 1682 De ovis paschalibuses, About Easter Eggs, by Georg Franck von Franckenau.

The original figure was indeed a hare. The hare was a popular motif in medieval church art. It was believed that the hare could reproduce without losing its virginity, similar to the Virgin Mary. However, as they are indeed, prolific breeders, hares and rabbits became a sign of fertility.

Additionally, since Easter falls in the Spring (for the Northern Hemisphere), it is a time of birth and hatchings for bunnies, chicks and ducklings alike, all of which are signs of Easter.

The Methodist Church

Easter Sunday
9:15 am Worship Service
10:30 am Brunch & Egg Hunt

Continue to Celebrate Easter
by bringing Christ into your family.

Marriage Oneness
an 8-week program to prepare couples,
to embrace God's best for their marriages.

Preview & Orientation: April 12 10:30 am

Regular Sunday Services
9:15 am & 11:30 am Worship
10:30 am Servicio de Adoración

Visalia United Methodist Church
5200 W. Caldwell Ave. • 559-627-1660 • vumc.org

Tulare United Methodist Church

Maundy Thursday service
Thursday, April 2, 2015
5:30 pm Potluck
6:45 pm Worship Service/ Last Supper Celebration

Easter Sunday Celebration Service
Flowering Of The Cross
Sunday, April 5, 2015 @ 10:00 am

228 W Kern Ave. Tulare
559.686.8523 **www.tularemethodistchurch.com**

Three Rivers, CA ~ April 10, 11 & 12

Jazzaffair 2015

Jazz for the Generations...A Family Affair!

Band Line Up

High Sierra Jazz Band
Au Brothers/Howard Miyata
Blue Street Jazz Band
Bob Draga and Friends
Cornet Chop Suey
Flip Oakes Quartet
High Street Band
Kylie Castro and Friends
Jerry Krahn
Night Blooming Jazzmen
Reedley River Rats
Titan Hot Seven
Tom Rigney and Flambeau
Wally's Warehouse Waifs

www.Jazzaffair.info

SPECIAL TICKET OFFER!
Bring your child, any age, and their ticket will be 1/2 price!
Children under 12 free when accompanied by an adult.

Tickets available in advance or at the door!
$25.00 for Friday or Sunday tickets
$45.00 for Saturday
$95.00 for Friday-Sunday
RV parking available!

(559) 561-4549